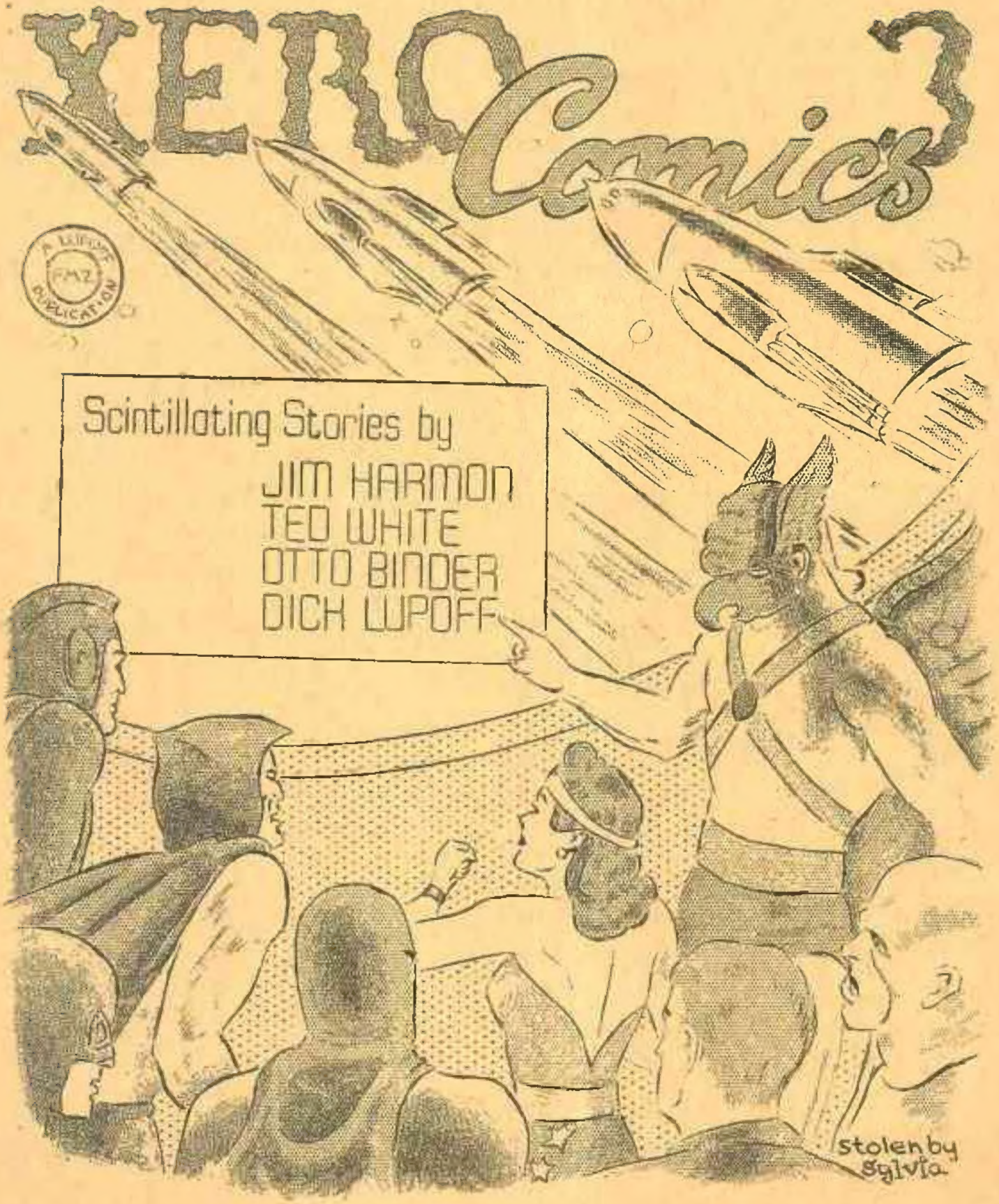
XERO Comics
A FANZINE PUBLICATION
Scintillating Stories by
JIM HARMON
TED WHITE
OTTO BINDER
DICK LUPOFF
stolen by Sylvia

XERO 3

January, 1961

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XERO continues to appall an already reeling fandom at the behest of Pat & Dick Lupoff, 215 E 73rd Street, New York 21, New York. Do you want to be appalled? Copies are available for contributions, trades, or letters of comment. No sales, no subs. No, Virginia, the title was not changed.

mimeo by QWERTYUIOPress, as usual.

What To Do About What To Do About It: Three Views

1. A Hard Core by Don Thompson

A few comments about Ray Bean's article which may or may not be helpful. I've had similar experiences with readers joining fan clubs. While at Penn State, I was president of the SF Society there, founded by James F. Cooper Jr, and continued by me after he gafiated. The first meeting held each year packed them in: the first meeting of all brought in 50 people, enough to get us our charter from the University. No subsequent meeting ever brought in more than half that, except when we held an auction.

Of those people, I could count on maybe five people to show up regularly, meeting after meeting, just to sit and talk. If we got a program together, we could double or triple that. One of the most popular was the program when we invited a Naval ROTC captain to talk about atomic submarines and their place in future wars, using Frank Herbert's novel Dragon in the Sea (or Under Pressure or 21st Century Sub, depending upon where you read it) as a starting point. The fact that he was also one of the most actively warmongering individuals I have ever encountered gave us food for discussion and kept us going for quite a while.

We borrowed a couple of movies from the Philadelphia group and shoed them to pretty large crowds. We got some 40 or so people in for an auction (we cleared $50, I think) including a reporter for the school paper who came to interview me about Sputnik and wound up buying a couple of books. (Incidentally, the interview never appeared; I was interviewed some 5 or 6 times a year on different subjects, since I was also news and publicity director for the radio station, college folk music bug and disc jockey, etc, and none of the interviews ever saw print.)

The really unusual thing about this, and the thing which crottled the SF Society, was the lack of interest on the part of the fans. We started out with Jim Cooper, who used to letterhack for Standard, and Jim Broschart, who used to letterhack for Grue and Hyphen, and a couple of quieter but equally avid fans such as myself. Then there was a second string of avid fans and readers. Then came the lowly uninitiated.

THe fans never showed up. We had to get Broschart and drag him in by the heels. Cooper discovered Broschart and me, decided we were all the fans he wanted, since we were enough to talk to, and quit. Ted Serrill and Jim Goodwin, fairly active fen, gafiated. Then Broschart and Cooper gafiated.

Anyway, what resulted was that I had a hard core of two or three engineering students who read ASF and paperback books only. With a program I got more; with a straight discussion I got those two and maybe an occasional visitor. Always the visitors seemed fascinated by the bull sessions, joined in and gossiped... and never showed up again.

We also got a fair supply of nuts who wanted to talk about nothing but flying saucers, psionics, Atlantis and/or Mu, and a few S*E*R*I*O*U*S English Literature students who joined anything with "fiction" present or implied in the name and never attended more than one meeting. We also got one or two who needed to belong to an organization to get into a fraternity or sorority.

I dunno if this proves anything, except that there are people out there who'd like to join, but you have to have a hard core of real honest-to-God fans to keep it intact.

Just for the record, our advisor-sponsor was a professor of English Literature who had been defending sf for 20 years and reading it avidly for even longer. This gave us a spurious sort of respectability.

Snobbishness on the part of fans might account for some of it. A sort of "Why bother with those neos? They don't understand our history or our inside jokes." But we were all neos once. None of us were born fans, springing full grown from the head of Tucker or Willis. Right now would be a good time to start recruiting. As far as I can determine, for example, Cleveland contains three fans: Bill Thailing, Ben Jason, and me. Everyone else seems to have moved or gafiated.

11. A Pretty Big Percentage by Buck Coulson

Let me pounce on Beam's article. This can't be called a rebuttal, since I'm going to agree with Ray about half the time (which should startle the hell out of him). But I object to a few of his points. Like, first he says that the article will approach a solution to the science fiction doldrums. Then he goes on to explain how to get people who already read science fiction into a fan club. Sure, it's a worthy cause, but it's not what he said he was going to write about. Getting 157 members into ISFA isn't going to put any money into John Campbell's pocket, or help revive FUTURE. Not if the new members have already been buying mags for years, it isn't.

Now for a few criticisms of the article as he did write it. Ray says that "I and every other active fan I know (with few exceptions)" wanted a bigger and better fanclub. Since he's referring to the Indiana clubs, I'd say that the "few exceptions" amounted to a pretty big percentage of the active Indiana fans that Ray knows. However, I'm willing to concede that most fans want to boost fandom , and mention some more important points.

First, I agree with him that to establish and maintain a large club you have to have regular meetings, a program, etc, and not just bi-weekly parties. I would not belong to such a club, but for anyone who does want it Ray has a very good point.

Being "fannish" just annoys newcomers. For example, at one of the first ISFA meetings after the Hobby Show, with about 25 new members present, the entire "program" consisted of showing slides of past conventions and pointing out fan celebrities. Now being told that Bob Madle is a TAFF representative and Dave Kyle tells people where to sit means a hell of a lot to someone who discovered fandom two weeks ago, doesn't it? This is the sort of thing that killed off the new ISFA recruits. (I seem to recall, also, that Ray Beam was operating the slide projector at the time, but let's be charitable and say that it was against his better judgement ~~if he did it~~.)

When Ray gets back to the supposed point of his article by saying that fandom can support an organization capable of bolstering the stf field, I part company with him again. He wants to set up "a national organization to support the conventions." I suggest that he has an extremely short memory, since there are still lawsuits pending from the last national organization we had to support the conventions. Let's at least clear up the mess we left behind last time before trying the same experiment again. He says that 800 fans could "control distribution" in a city of 1,000,000 people. How, by politely asking the newsdealers to stock (or refuse to stock) a specific number of issues and titles? Somebody explain the facts about magazine distribution to Ray, please?

Would a $5 membership fee really mean a better convention? I doubt it, but since nobody has tried it there is no way of arguing the point. Ray might well be 100% correct. However -- would a better convention mean more new fans? Again it's a bit hard to collect accurate statistics, but I'd like to see some figures on the fan population after Chicon II or Nycon II -- say 6 months later -- compared to the fan population after Detroit or South Gate. The first two were "big" cons, of the type Ray's proposed big organization would sponsor, and the others were noted "faanish" cons. Does the type of convention make any difference in the size of fandom? If it does, I haven't noticed it.

Next, Ray's unique idea that fandom is a fraternal organization. Fandom has about as much similarity to a fraternal organization as it does to a labor union, and any old day that it does start bearing similarities to either one is the day I start using my spare time to better advantage.

With all my carping, we're left with one very valid point: anyone wanting to increase the size of a stf club should take Ray's advice to heart. As for me, I'm in this for fun.

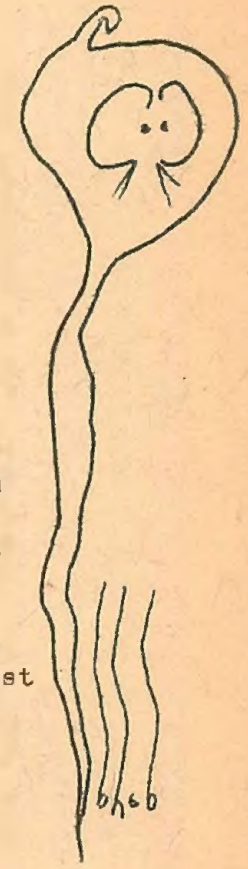
III. A Club of Their Own

by Russ Wolff

One night at the Pittcon a certain wee-hours gabfest took place. The participants were Ray Beam, both Lupoffs, Big Hearted Howard DeVore, and Doc Barrett; I sat on the fringes. The topic of the conversation was the same events that Ray describes in his article, and their implications for fandom if it wants to survive, no less grow. New blood is vital.

The trouble, as analyzed in that conversation, is that older fans and neos or prospective fans have different interests, different goals, and different things to offer eachother. This sound as though they might wind up complementing eachother nicely, but it just isn't so, unfortunately.

Let's see what a neo has and what he wants. Basically, a neo has a great enthusiasm for science fiction and related matters. What he wants is the company of people with similar interests, with whom he can share his enthusiasm through discussions, programs, etc.



An oder fan, by contrast, has long since cooled on the topic of stf. His interest is not all gone, but the former bonfire of enthusiasm has shown an increasingly discomforting resemblance to a funeral taper these last years. Sharing the interest with stf is an interest in fandom itself -- its various publications, clubs, feuds, conventions, etc.

So our bright-eyed neo, hoping and expecting to find what Ray aptly terms a "science fiction organization" attends a fanclub meeting and finds a "fan party" instead. What's going on is assorted conversations of all types, drinking, discussions of esoteric personalities and events, endless buildings upon private jokes and arcane raferences.... The neo leaves. Unless he is a rare individual indeed, who will sit there in misery for hours on end, and come back for more the next time, and the next, fandom has seen its last of him. How about fanzines? Most of them are fan parties on paper, marked by the same in-group orientation that makes the sensitive newcomer feel not only mystified but rejected.

But what about the fans? Are they to be expected to give neos the stf-oriented, organized activity which it seems they need? Not most of us, brother, and for heaven's sake, not me. I mean, how many years can you talk about THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES?

The solution proposed at Pittsburg -- I think it was Doc Barrett who put it forward -- was that when a fan group puts on a recruiting drive such as the one Ray described, they should not try to assimilate the new fans, but should aid them in setting up a science fiction club of their own. And let's realize that fandom must recruit if it does not want to die. Our recruiting used to be done for us by the prozines, through fan columns and fanzine reviews. A stf reader would get interested, send off for a fanzine (picking one that sounded as if it was not too esoteric), find it interesting, write some letters, and away he went. No more. As for letter column contacts, the present ration of letter columns is slim, and largely used up by regulars. No, we must recruit. And once a new club is set up, some experienced fan, sandbagged into volunteering for the job, should attend the first few meetings, and sporadically thereafter drop in to see how things are going.

Lend -- or preferably give them -- a copy of the FANCYCLOPEDIA II. The members of the sponsoring club should make themselves available to lend fanzines and explain the references, to inform the new group about things like conventions, and when that initial enthusiasm for stf begins to fade into a trufannish outlook, integrate the newcomers into the "senior" fan group, singly or en masse.

It sounded good to me at Pittsburg. Sort of boy-scoutish, but so what? It would work, but it would also mean work. However, people willing to expend the effort involved in the Indianpolis incident will likely be willing to expend the energy needed for the follow-up procedures outlined. The follow-up used by ISFA obviously failed to make good on a magnificent opportunity. This new approach might succeed.

MADNESS and HORROR

by Mike Deering

I've always been fascinated by films that were shockers. Not shockers in a sense that the film contained violence upon violence or raw slices of sadism, but rather the shock that suddenly jolts you in your seat, makes you look around just to see if reality is still there, and then forces you to settle back, almost exhausted, as the shocking point of the film is driven home.

As Harlan Ellison pointed out so vividly in ZERO #1, PSYCHO is such a film. It does not carry the quiet, subdued, almost mournful impact of film masterpieces like OUR TOWN or OF MICE AND MEN, but instead screeches to a halt with the impact of a physical blow.

Why is this impact so pronounced? It could be due to a number of reasons. Violence, for one, could be the cause, but anyone looking for violence in PSYCHO may be disappointed. There is some, granted, but it is not the violence that makes PSYCHO memorable. I've really been quite amused to read reviews accusing the murder scenes of being nauseating and repulsive. This indicates more than ever that the murder scenes, at least, have achieved their purpose. In the scene where Janet Leigh is repeatedly stabbed in a shower, not once do you see the knife penetrate her skin, or view her actual wounds. Instead her agony is conveyed by intimation: the knife rising and falling, her screams and writhing, the blood flowing down the drain in the bathtub. Hell, there was more sadistic violence in the chariot race in BEN-HUR than there was in all of PSYCHO.

The other murder scene in the film is relatively brief, yet again carries an impact, this time through the sudden shock technique which is akin to having someone shout "Boo!" as you enter a dark room. Martin Balsam as a private detective enters the old house where Tony Perkins and his mother live. Very slowly he advances to the steps and softly begins to climb them, keeping an alert eye out. The camera shifts to a point almost directly above the steps and as Balsam advances the musical accompaniment grows softer and softer. As he reaches the top the music dies out and the viewer notices how infernally quiet and eerie it is. Suddenly maniacal screams cut through the air and "mother" rushes out of a side room carrying a large knife and before the viewer can catch his breath "she" plunges it into Balsam. He loses his balance and goes tumbling backwards down the stairs, "mother" in pursuit. Unable to regain his balance, he cries out as the knife is raised.

This whole murder scene, from the time Balsam first makes contact with the killer to the fade-out as the knife is plunged into his chest takes less than a minute. What contributes to the true horror of it is the skilful build-up, which emphasizes the weirdness and quiet of the old mansion, in comparison with its unexpected occupant.

I regard PSYCHO as a valiant giant step forward in the art of motion pictures. Insanity has been exploited before, but never to such length. Of course SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER dwelt on insanity, including a dozen assorted perversions and aberrations. PSYCHO has one long, slow, brooding, calculating insanity.

In 1919, when the motion picture industry was nothing more than an experimental infant field, a film was made by a German director, Robert Wiene, which has come to be regarded as a true masterpiece, a shocking, devestating, thrilling example of artistic film making. I refer to THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI, which, I feel, is analogous in many respects to PSYCHO.

It would be wise first to give the history and a brief summary of the plot of THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI; then discuss the similarities between it and the Hitchcock film. The older picture was written for the screen by Carl Meyer and Hans Janowitz, and made in Germany in 1919, although it was first released in New York in April, 1921.

On the surface, the plot looks uncomplicated. A strange man known as Doctor Caligari (Werener Krauss) has been appearing at numerous country fairs, exhibiting a colleague, Cesare, a sleepwalker (Conrad Veidt). While performing at the fair in Holstenwald, two murders are committed. Francis, a close friend of one of the victims, suspects that Caligari may have been responsible for the crimes. He reports his suspicions to the local police but it accomplishes no good; there is no evidence against Caligari. While at the fair, Professor Olfen, the father of Francis' fiancee Jeanne (Lil Dagover) decides to examine Cesare. A few nights later, Cesare kidnaps Jeanne. There is a chase and the sleepwalker eludes his pursuers, but releases Jeanne.

Convinced now that Caligari is responsible for the crime, Francis and Olfen return to the fair, only to discover that Caligari and Cesare have escaped. Francis discovers that Caligari has used witchcraft and black magic in gaining his influene over the sleepwalker. It is Caligari's evil mind that directs Cesare to kill, solely for Caligari's warped pleasure.

But in the final scene of the picture there is a complete reversal as it is revealed that Francis is a patient in a mental asylum and Caligari is the chief doctor!

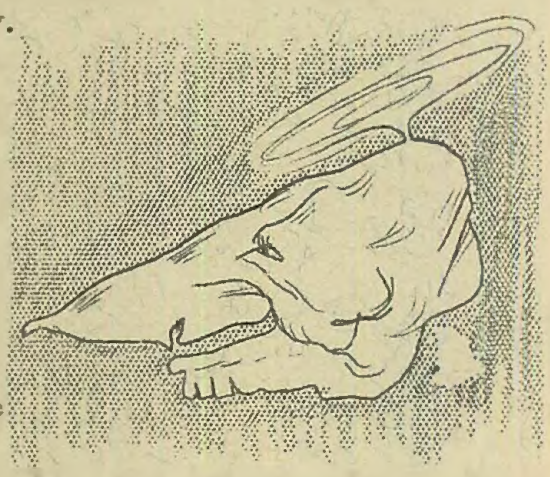
The whole mood of the film emphasizes the impressionistic, almost surrealistic atmosphere, that was finally explained in the last scene. The settings of the picture, constructed by Hermann Warn, Walter Reimann, and Walter Rohrig, lend much to the overall mood that pervades each scene. Director Wiene deliberately adopted stylized and gloomy settings, such as great, angular shadows, dark streets and walks, a town constable perched grimly on a six-foot stool writing in a ledger; obviously exagerrated signs of authority. The whole film smacks of Freudian symbolism and stands far above the typical horror film. THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI started a new trend in film making in Germany which spread throughout the world.

Now in PSYCHO the symbolism is not as great, but parallels exist. Basically, both PSYCHO and THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI are stories of madmen. In each instance madness is implied, but not for the specific person who is actually mad. In PSYCHO, Norman Bates is looked upon as an interesting person presenting a sympathetic picture. It seems wrong and unfair that he should be subject to the whims of his domineering mother. In his major dialogue scene, near the beginning when he has invited Janet Leigh to have dinner in the motel den, every implication exists that his mother (who's presented as a real and distinct person) is deliberately hurting him for some unknown reason. The audience has no reason to believe otherwise.

Francis in THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI is an equally sympathetic person who, it appears, must contend with the evil Doctor Caligari, who is seeking to unnerve Francis by having Cesare kill his best friend and abduct his fiancee.

The background for the stories is first supplied by having the main characters provide a viewpoint, and later this background is modified to show the true situation. The action in PSYCHO is pretty routine at the beginning, and it's not until Tony Perkins' monologue that the viewer gets the idea that something is wrong. The whole background of PSYCHO is first explained by Norman Bates, who has come to accept certain things as reality and altered others, such as saying his parents died of natural causes. It is Norman who introduces his mother as being slightly off her rocker, an old lady with urges to kill. Throughout the film, till Simon Oakland's explanation at the end, the audience sees things through Norman's eyes.

In THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI it is the same way. There is no hint that it is Francis who is insane and Caligari is just a person in a madman's world. To the viewer Doctor Caligari is the evil doctor, imprisoning and controlling Cesare by his will. We, the audience, see it this way because Francis, the madman, sees it this way.



The settings of PSYCHO, while not specifically in a surrealistic style, do manage to convey an atmosphere of chill and dread. The gloomy, wind-torn mansion on the hill, the quiet, decrepit motel, the almost obsessive fear of Norman Bates all contribute to denote his madness.

And finally, the method in which Norman Bates' true mental condition is revealed comprise two of the most splendidly chilling scenes I've ever witnessed. To the audience, believing Norman's statements, the intrusion by Lila Crane (Vera Miles) as she enters the old house near the end of the picture causes a feeling of almost unwarranted trespass. Yet the enigma concerning the true identity of the old lady is enough to dispel any feelings of wrongdoing on Lila's part. The oddness is heightened by Norman's room, the juvenile setting, the toys, the books. And this leads up to the moment in the fruit cellar where Lila meets Mrs. Bates, and the realization of who she is and what Norman has done begins to penetrate.

As the dried, mummified corpse of Norman's mother swings around into a close-up Lila screams and another Mrs. Bates rushes in, swinging a heavy, vicious knife, clad in an ill-fitting dress and a cheap wig. Thus the horror of the film has taken a new step and advanced into insanity.

There is the psychologist's explanation, so much eye-wash for the idiot segment of the audience unable to comprehend what they have just seen portrayed without a blow-by-blow explanation. But then we have the last scene, where the true horror of the situation is impressed on the minds of the viewers. Norman has gone completely insane now, and as he sits alone in a cell, he is his mother.

In a more careful analysis, it becomes apparent that the beginning, middle, and end of both films is similar in style and content.

Both begin with a conventional and not too exciting beginning. In PSYCHO, the beginning is nothing more than a superfluous clinch involving a tryst in a hotel room between Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) and Sam Loomis (John Gavin).

It's one of the few features of PSYCHO that could have been eliminated without causing any harm to the remainder of the film. The only thing it really does, besides giving Janet Leigh a chance to parade around fetchingly in her undies, is establish a background for the characters. And this character-establishment could have been accomplished in a more skilful way.

In THE CABINET OF DOCTORE CALIGARI we find a similarly harmless opening with the arrival of Doctor Caligari and Cesare in the small town to perform in the carnival. It's nothing to provoke alarm, and may be looked upon with even boredom accumulated by an overabundance of such scenes, as in PSYCHO.

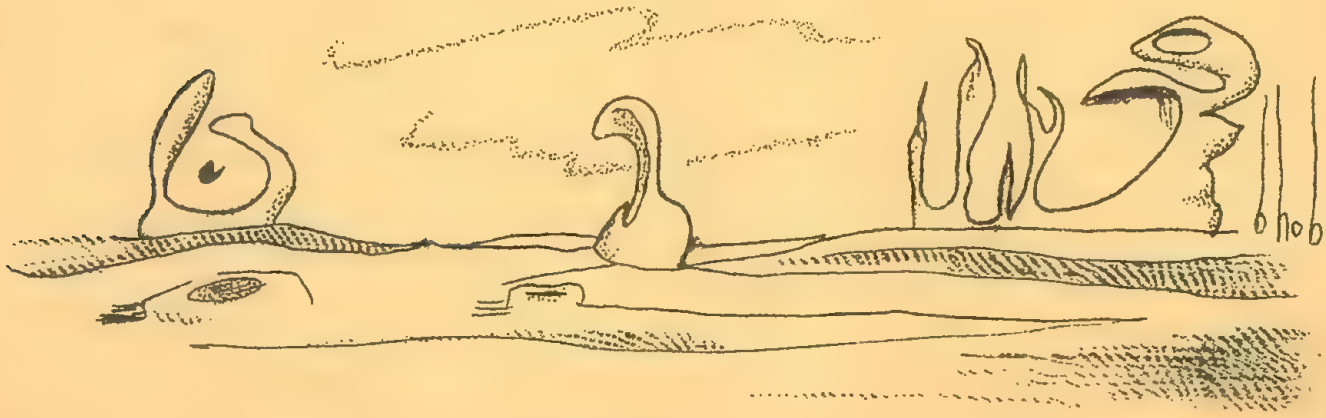
Then a new element is introduced. In THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI it's the unexplainable murders, one of which affects Francis greatly and providds an incentive for him in tracking down the killer. In PSYCHO, the element of the $40,000 Marion Crane absconds with and her frantic escape, until she reaches the Bates Motel, is the new element.

These films are not the type with predictable endings. One would have to be a clairvoyant to determine the ending of PSYCHO from its opening romantic clinch, or the ending of THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI from the arrival of Cesare and Doctor Caligari at the carnival.

The parallel of the two in respect to the climax is even more pronounced. In PSYCHO we learn that it's Norman Bates who is insane and has been committing the murders; in THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI Francis' observations are proved to be figments of his diseased imagination.

Whether this trend in films, as started with THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI and advanced, forty-one years later, with PSYCHO, will continue I cannot say. It is not easy to create a film of this sort, in which the viewers have no choice but to see events through the distorted viewpoint of a madman. But the end result, when the true shock of the film is revealed, is worth waiting for.

With luck, a competent director, producer, a writer who knows what he wants to say and how to say it, an adequate cast, the motion picture industry could be catapulted into a new facet of the art of expressionism, concentrating on symbolism and logic to achieve its desired effect.



From the SF Shelf

by Larry M Harris

Multum in Parvo

The science-fiction boom may be over; the magazines may be disappearing from the stands, and the few that remain may be lowering their rates slowly and with caution; the spate of science-fiction films may have sunk, again, in response to a widespread public demand for Randolph Scott and Tuesday Weld (and wouldn't that be nice casting for LOLITA?) -- anyhow, science-fiction may be on the downswing once more, but you'd never know it from looking at the bookshelves.

Doubleday continues its novel publications, of course; there is still science-fiction coming from Ballantine, Ace, Bantam, Signet, Gnome, Simon and Schuster -- and others. But even this is a trickle compared to the roaring cataract of anthologies, which seem to pour from the nations presses at about the rate of one a week.

I have no firm statistics on the number of anthologies currently floating around -- but I own about eighty of them, and my collection is a long, long way from being complete, even as regards the last four years. Obviously, there is an enormous appetite among the book buying public for this sort of thing, or else book publishers have been kidding themselves in a lurid and extensive manner for some time now.

The trouble is that anthologies of science-fiction are usually pretty bad investments. And unless you believe in the fundamental stupidity of the American people (as I do not), this difficulty requires some explanation.

Let's take some sample anthologies of various types and see if we can come up with some sort of gloss for this curious contradiction.

= = = =

(Gold, Campbell, Boucher, Neville) and this added rarity to the list of endearing qualities. As far as originals are concerned, then, the buyers do appear to be fairly sensible, rational people.

+ + + +

So, in this category the best we can say is: It depends. If you sincerely buy the anthologies as representing the best stories of the year, you are a little foolish. But if you buy them (as I do) for the occasional unaccountable discovery -- you may have a point.

Gradually, as you can see, we are approaching a frontier where reason gives way to something else. Let's take category three and see if we come any closer.

* *

By the seven rings of Saturn -- what do I do with her? -- Star Pirate

* *

3. The theme anthology. Here are a lot of stories all put together to make a brand-new story: the conquest of space, man vs. the machine, or anything else sufficiently wide to allow for a disparity of stories, and sufficiently simple to serve as an organizing principle. And here, again, we meet the occasional story from outside the field.

But we don't meet it nearly so often. Unlimited by a framework as tight as Merril's, these anthologiests don't often feel it worth their while to find oddball stories by Gerald Kersh or Ray Russell or even George P. Elliott. Besides, such stories are not likely to fit into any simple framework; they are originals, in the best sense, and not category work.

So the odds on spending your money wisely go down somewhat. And there's another little difficulty about theme anthologies.

The theme itself is likely to be so wide that it ceases to serve as a real organizing principle. "Man vs. the Machine" is such a theme; lots of stories deal with the basic issue, in any one of a hundred ways, but they don't pull together into a single thread that makes the anthology (the only excuse that it has for being) more than the sum of its parts.

Yet, we can't say that people who buy this type of anthology are definitely crazy. That adjective must be reserved for the patrons of type four.

\- -

I'll show you something inside..it will make you feel very sad -- and very proud!

-- Lyssa Bowman

\- -

4. The magazine-anthology. Such as, for instance, the spate of Horace Gold anthologies from GALAXY, the annual BEST FROM F&SF, and so on. These anthologies not only fail to serve a useful purpose, they also prevent better anthologies from fulfilling their own best aims. A story picked for one of these (or, indeed, for any anthology; there are exceptions but not many) is debarred from appearing in any other anthology for a stated period -- six months after publication, perhaps. This means that the "best" anthologies may not use many stories used in these collections -- and this requirement can, believe me, hurt like hell.

Now, I once computed that, for the price of a single magazine-anthology, the reader could get a year's subscription to the magazine in question -- thus giving him not only the fifteen or so stories in the anthology, but over a hundrod more, nowise despicable. He would lose nothing; he would gain a great deal. The question is now a little different, since BEST FROM F&SF volumes, and GALAXY volumes, are appearing in soft cover -- but the principle applies. If you do not read F&SF, why should

THE BEST FROM F&SF attract you? I don't read MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED, and a volume containing THE BEST FROM MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED, if it were given away free in bookstores, would not attract me; I would pass it up.

And if you do read F&SF, why in hell do you buy an anthology guaranteed to contain nothing but stories you've already read, and probably still own?

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
Try a little atom juice, ugly. Uncle Star is coming through the slot. --Star Pirate
+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

No, I started this article with the idea that I was going to find a reason for people buying the anthologies they buy. And I'm finishing it in the firm conviction that there is no reason; that people buy anthologies simply because they are there. Maybe a kind of pall of stupidity falls over people once in a while, and they rush out -- not for oysters, as Dickens says -- but for anthologies. Maybe.

Anyhow, if you do buy these things, particularly category four -- think about it, will you? See if maybe there's a reason. And if you can come up with one, plain, simple, and sensible, let me know about it, huh? I'm going crazy out here, all alone.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Right as rain, Herc, me lad. But now, if you don't mind, you'd better get back to the space ship...Lutra and I have to discuss...er...business. -- Flint Baker.
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

ADDENDA: I feel it only fair, since I've been so tough on anthologies in this piece, to recite a litany composed of some good ones. There are good ones, though not so many as to invalidate my major thesis. If you haven't got these, do rush out and buy them; they are worth reading; they are worth rereading; they are worth keeping.

ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE, Healy-McComas
CHILDREN OF WONDER, William Tenn
BEYOND THE BARRIERS OF SPACE AND TIME, Judith Merril
STAR SF #1, #2, #3, Frederik Pohl
NINE TALES OF SPACE AND TIME and NE' TALES OF SPACE AND TIME, Healy
THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION, Groff Conklin

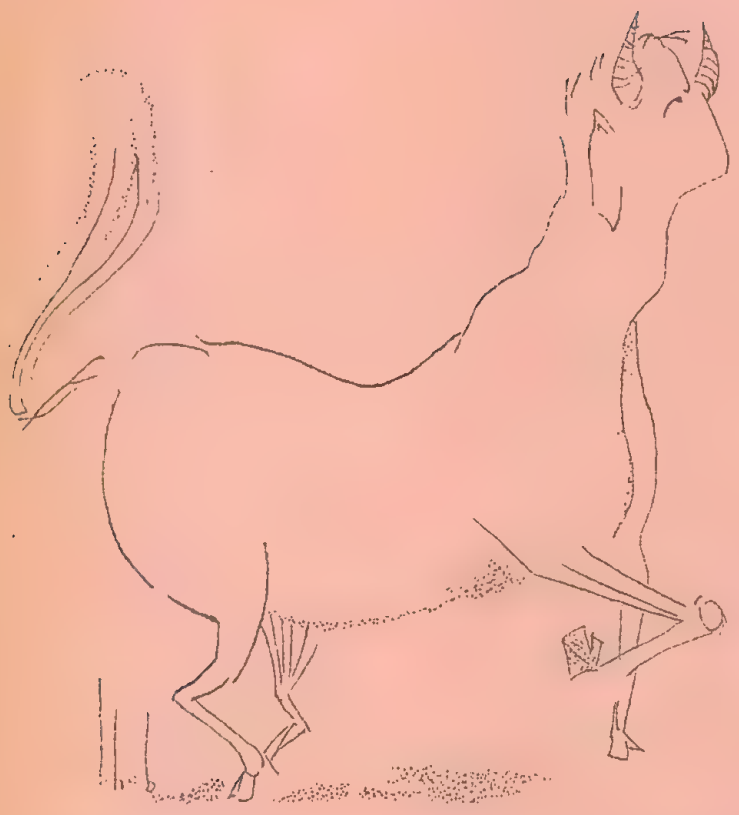
There are nine books, all good books, all anthologies.

Now can we stop for a while?

Next time around, by the way, only God knows what will happen. But watch this space. Something, I should think, is bound to.

/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /
Balderdash, bunk and phooie! Whoever figured out that pic was hitting the pipe too much! -- Reef Ryan
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

more Larry Harris:



Where Do You Get Those Crazy Ideas?

The fact is that nobody ever asks me that question. They all assume they know. Maybe they do. I wish they'd tell me, though, because I don't.

Somebody comes up to me and says: "Gee, that was a funny idea of yours, about those poodles and the TV guy. I guess you figured a lot of people are interested in TV, and a lot of people own dogs, so it would be popular, huh?"

So I say yes. Because what else is there to say? I wrote a book called THE PICKLED POODLES (Random House, $2.95, advt.) and it deals with a TV guy and some dogs and some other things, and do I know why I wrote it? No. I picked the TV guy because I needed someone with money and a large business orientation, and TV is something I know a little about. I needed such a character because somebody once said to me, by a slip of the tongue as lovely as it was unexpected, "I saw this great play on TV last night. There's this guy, see, and he's being blackmailed but he doesn't know it..."

Even if that hadn't been what the play was about (and it wasn't), I had to figure out some way to make the idea work. A man being blackmailed, who doesn't know he's being blackmailed...the idea has a certain charm. In order to work it out, I found I needed a character with certain business appurtenances. Hence, the moneyed man. Hence (because the money and the business organization have to come from somewhere, and my knowledge of Wall Street is not very extensive) the TV guy.

And the dogs? I said to myself: "I would like some dogs in this book. Large, drunken dogs. I think they would be very pleasant to have around." So I put in some dogs. Then I had to plot the rest of the book, but it was easier going, since I had so many known factors -- the dogs, the TV guy and the blackmail bit, and so on.

I write books because I like writing books, and I write the books I write because those are the ideas that occur to me. I carried around the notion of super-talented juvenile delinquents for two years, trying it in story after story, because I liked it. When Garrett and I did OUT LIKE A LIGHT, I realized what I liked about my delinquents: they were funny. Indeed they were. I had a lot of fun with them, and apparently the readers of ASTOUNDING did.

THAT SWEET LITTLE OLD LADY is part Campbell's idea, part mine, part Garrett's; at this distance, I can't reconstruct it any better than that. The entire book was written in about sixty hours, counting sleeping and eating time, with Garrett doing draft one and me doing draft two. OUT LIKE A LIGHT took a lot longer: eight days. (But for two of those days we didn't do any work at all; we worked four, goofed two and worked two.) OCCASION FOR DISASTER seems, in retrospect, to have gone on forever; for the first time we had complicated rewrite problems, and the book staggered toward final completion like James Barton, in his old drunk act, reaching for a lamp-post. Once again, the basic notion was Campbell's, but the decorations (seventy-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety words) were ours, and I don't know who did what any more. I do remember that Garrett originally created Queen Elizabeth I (Rose Thompson) and that I created Dr. Thomas O'Connor of Westinghouse Labs. Malone and Burris are joint creations, and who, if anyone, is responsible for Brubitsch, Borbitsch and Garbitsch I cannot possibly say.

As for PAGAN PASSIONS...well, this was our notion, originally, but you'd never know it. Horace Gold provided the main plot-line, Garrett provided much of the mythology -- and several unsung heroes provided that list of musical instruments, which took twenty-four hours of intensive and slightly drunken research. I listed every instrument I could come up with; Garrett added a few of the kazoo variety; and then I began calling friendly musicians and music-students.

Ah research...now here is something I do very little of. In THE PICKLED POODLES, the entire action is laid in Chicago and Topeka. I'd had Chicago described to me (never been there) but I knew nothing about Topeka. I called some friends, but they had never been to Topeka either. One of them (I think Garrett) said "It's a typical middle-western town." On that sentence, my total research for the book, I based two chapters.

Lee Wright at Random did correct some of my more egregious errors regarding poodles. I have never owned a dog, and don't even like them very much. I dreamed up a poodle and set it going; Lee made it plausible, much later.

But sometimes I do a little research. Just a little, not enough to be dangerous (because research, like garlic, is best in small quantities; a lot of it simply overpowers everything else in the mixture). I still remember how to say: "American s.o.b." in Russian, which Garrett and I needed for an early draft of OCCASION FOR DISASTER. (The scene no longer occurs in the book.) I know a number of deadly poisons, and some which ought to be and aren't. I know the names of all the major Greek gods. I even know how to name a race-horse, and the best way for a female impersonator to pretend to mammary development (any name containing fourteen letters or under, and use a brassiere filled with birdseed to give natural heft and motion). Most of this has come in handy for various stories.

But this does not answer the major question.

Where do I get those things, those crazy ideas?

They come to me. Sometimes Garrett or Campbell arrives bringing them. Sometimes they come under their own power. I was thinking of vampires the other night (it's a peaceful subject, like the family tree of the Hohenzollerns or the poison techniques of the more pushy Borgia offspring) and a new ideas up and bit me. So maybe I'll write it.

Also, the other night, as I was dropping off to sleep, the world's single most horrible notion struck me. I sat up in bed, going: "Wheep, wheep," in a terrified fasion and flapping aimlessly. Then I spent some time rationalizing the notion. Then, next day, I called a publisher.

Maybe there's a book in this notion. I'm beginning to think there is. The publisher also seems to think so.

So when you read it, don't ask me where I got the idea. It came and bit me. They do that sometimes. I write in several fields -- mysteries, sf, unpublished plays, Westerns, confessions, humor, horror, men's adventures, crossword puzzles...because You Never Know. The next idea is likely to be anything at all.

Like the idea for this article, for instance. Dick Lupoff asked me to write it, so I did. It took me twenty mintues. It runs one thousand words. When I finish it I am going to send it to XERO and go inside and get a drink and drink it.

Then, later, or maybe tomorrow or so, I'm going to get to work on another idea.

There are lots of ideas floating around.

All I have to do is weed out the ones that demand research. Then I get to work on the other ones. This saves time and labor, and makes being a writer easier and more fun.

But, of course, not everybody can be a writer. Here is a test:

> When you look at a beautiful girl (girls, make that a handsome man) -- when you look at a beautiful girl (and for you people of both sexes -- ch, the hell with it) -- when you look at a beautiful girl, do you get ideas?

Of course you do.

Do those ideas invariably lead you to a typewriter, or to a pen and paper?

They don't? So don't be a writer. Mine, damn it, do.

Larry M. Harris

THE SECRET FILES OF CAPTAIN VIDEO

by Arthur Merlyn

Nostalgia is busting out all over, and especially in the sercon journals, of which suddenly there are once more a good many. Redd Boggs' DISCORD has followed up a Jim Harmon article about "I Love a Mystery" with a complete script of one of those shows, demonstrating -- to me at least -- that those of us who missed it were lucky; and now we have these acres of copy about comic books in XERO. No doubt about it, this is National Back-to-the-Womb Year, with a vengeance. Kind of hard on us types who are rowing, more or less desperately, in the other direction.

But I have to confess that Mike Deckinger's piece about Captain Video caught me in the treacly toils. As I bit into the madeleine, all unknowing, my mind went reeling back to the days when I was writing the show. I may recover, but I don't think I can count on it.

Mike's essay stops short of the real golden days of the show's history: the period when the little gobbets of old Westerns were thrown out, and the program was revised to consist of new stories each 15 days (three weeks) long, each by a different author. This change took place when the advertising agency for General Foods, the main sponsor, assigned to the show a new producer-cum-account-exec, a dark intense woman named Olga Druce.

Olga had heard of s-f somewhere and began to bring in s-f writers to do the scripts under the new format. For a long time she depended upon Bryce Walton, who did -- as she gradually began to recognize -- a very sloppy job. I remember on sequence in which Walton gave new names, and new and impossible orbits, to all the moons of Jupiter, thus greatly confusing my (then) eight-year-old, who had had them straight for almost a year. Olga doubtless didn't know the Jovian satellites any better than Bryce did, but she objected powerfully to the amount of violence in the Walton scripts; whenever he ran out of ideas he staged a fist-fight, which meant about every other day. She began scrounging around for other s-f writers.

During the succeeding year she used three-week scripts by R.S. Richardson, Walter M. Miller Jr. and me (and this is by no means a complete list). Some of these stories were good, and the Miller, if I can trust my memory, was downright distinguished. Furthermore, they were fun to do -- which was lucky, for the pay was not precisely princely: $100 for each half-hour script, or $1500 for a three-week story. In those days, and maybe even now, the Dumont network was called "Channel 5-and-dime," and deserved it. Of course as a lump $1500 looks like a fair sum of money;

Of course Arthur Merlyn isn't his real name. The customary XERO prize, a free copy of FLYING SAUCERS, to the first person who successfully identifies Merlyn. Another article by the same author -- under his real name -- will appear in XERO 4.

but 15 half-hour television scripts come to about 120,000 words, or twice as long as the average novel.

(The job did enable me to charge off my first television set on my income tax as a business expense; maybe that ought to be counted in.)

Stories usually evolved over dinner with Olga and the director -- the latter a quiet, beefy man who turned into a shouting fury on the monitoring bridge. Olga drank numberless Scotch Mists and carefully explained the pitfalls. Of these the main one was the character of Captain Video, which could not be allowed to change in the course of a story. This made him so wooden that the first temptation for a writer was to drop him down a deep, dark hole in Episode 1, and not let him out until Episode 15. This, Olga said firmly, would not do; the good Captain had to be in the midst of the action all the time. We qualled (a useful word invented by Bob Lowndes circa 1946, covering the same ground as "croggled" but with more overtones) and said Okay, Olga. And then, there were those fist fights; the word on them was Nix.

There were some open areas, however. Olga had no objection to the writer's giving the Captain a sense of humore, providing that it was quiet situational humor and not wise-cracks or sight-gags. A good deal could also be done with Commissioner Carey, the Commissioner of Public Safety who was ostensibly Video's boss: a bumbling type who could nevertheless be made rather wistfully funny if you took care with him. (Walton had made him a repulsive office tyrant who never did anything but pound his desk and fume, which Olga wanted to get away from.) The Video Ranger, the Captain's young sidekick, could be allowed a certain amount of irreverent humor so long as it wasn't directed against the Captain.

There were also some more technical outs. One of the standard characters was the communications officer, Rogers, who was announcer Fred Scott; he opened the show on camera, thus: "Good evening, Rangers. This is Rogers, speaking for Captain Video." (Anyone for Boskone?) In the course of doing my own stint on the show I discovered that he could be used as a character in the main body of the script, at no extra expense; an innovation, to the best of my knowledge. Fred was, it turned out, a very resourceful actor and every script thereafter used him extensively. Then there was also the television institution of the "five-liner," but I'll delay describing that until a little later.

The actors were almost uniformly excellent, especially considering the handicaps under which they labored as a matter of course. Viewers often complained of the frequency with which they stammered or blew lines, but without considering that Hodges, Scott, et al. were required to memorize a half-hour script each and every day -- a frightful chore which they performed well and cheerfully, on the whole. I was unaware of the pressure under which they operated until after my three weeks of scripts were all written, and so threw many roadblocks in their way -- in particular the name of the spaceship involved, the Telemachus, over which they all fell repeatedly. Commissioner Carey never got it right even when it was syllabified for him on the teleprompter. By the time the show was running I was frantically rewriting the last week of it to remove as many of these barriers as I could, as soon as I became aware of them in rehearsal. (There was only one rehearsal for each day's show.)

In addition to the regulars (Video, the Commissioner, the Ranger, Rogers, and a character named Craig invented by Walton who was a sort of opposite number for the Ranger and whom I retained because -- unlike the others -- I could make him grow and change), my show involved several "outsiders" who were hired for this three-week sequence only. One of these was a girl, Lois somebody, a charming tyke who handled

her role very well and greatly enlivened the rehearsals with all sorts of fantastic horseplay with the Ranger. The other was a British emigre, Malcolm somebody, who played my villain with great gusto, and whom I encountered later in more expensive TV shows; for instance, he played the friend of the deceased Great Author in a Hallmark dramatization of Maugham's "Cakes and Ale." As Jason, my space pirate, he sneered and fleered with every evidence of enjoying himself. His end, alas, was horrible; some years later his hotel room was broken into and he was beaten to death with bottles. As far as I know the murderers have yet to be caught, and I doubt that anybody is looking for them any more. At the time he could hardly have had more than ten bucks in his wallet, for he had been out of work for more than a year.

Hodges himself was delightful, and I doubt that I will ever forget him. The woodenness of the character he played was an injustice to him, for he was very fast on his feet, and responded with gratitude and virtuosity to any little subtlety the writer could manage to give his role. He was also magnificent with the kids who visited the show; if they worshipped him on TV, they went away from a personal encounter convinced that they themselves had been ennobled. He was as pure a case of what type-casting does to an actor as I have ever encountered; I am perfectly convinced that no role exists that he couldn't have done well, but his identification with Capt. Video was so complete that he has never since been given a decent chance.

Meanwhile, however, back at Capt. Video's secret base, there were rumblings, followed finally by an explosion. General Foods' agency withdrew its sponsorship, leaving behind only a gaggle of spot commercials plugging candy bars and other small change. With the cornflakes went Olga Druce, never to be seen again.

Dumont, convinced that nothing could kill Captain Video, went on as before, engaging a former movie director named Frank Telford as both producer and director. He was rather impressive. He introduced a number of technical tricks to the show, including a technique of rear projection which vastly expanded the kinds of backdrops a writer could call for; and on the bridge he was as quiet as a mouse, in sharp contrast to all the yelling which had gone on up there before. He also worked out a number of ingenious ways to keep the main characters in the story while they were actually away on vacation; I vividly remember the two weeks during which Commissioner Carey was tied up on the floor of a runaway spaceship (a still photograph given action by rolling the camera viewing it on gimbals).

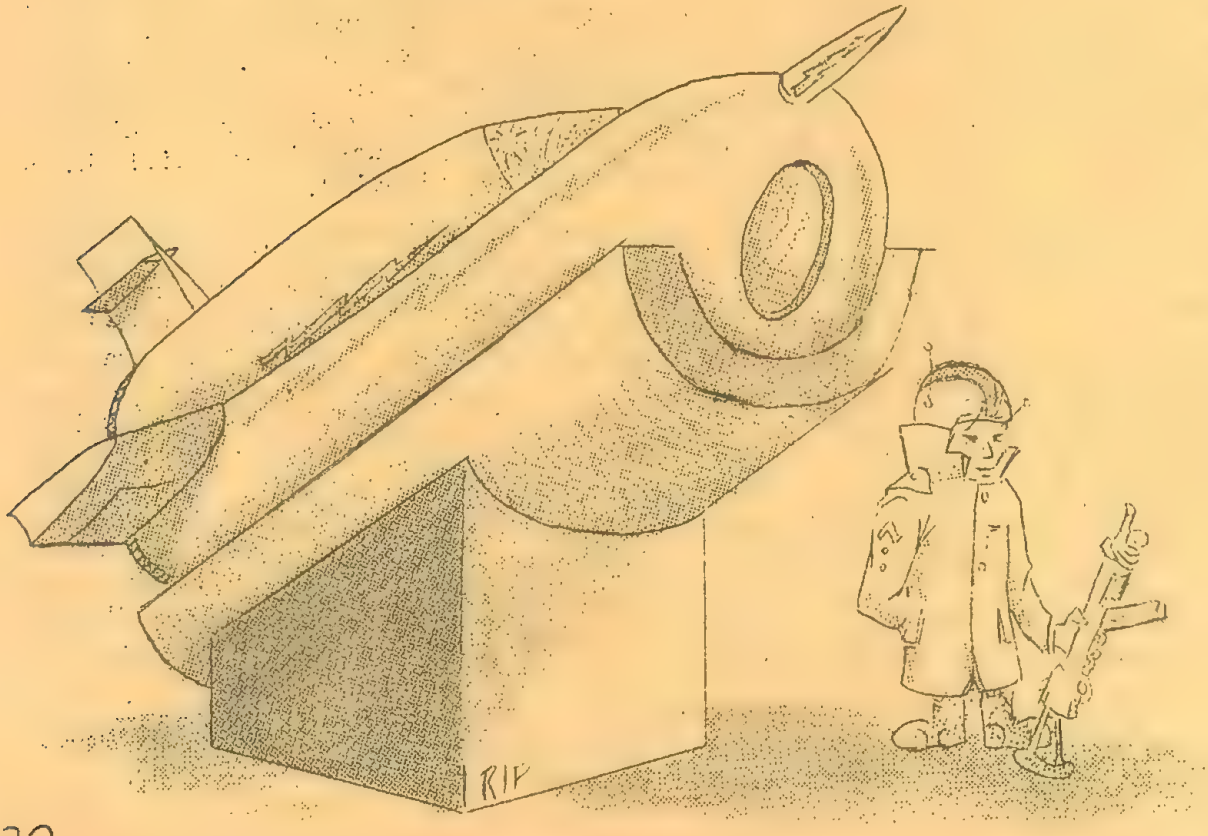
Telford also developed the Saturday show, "The Secret Files of Captain Video," which ran at 11:00 A.M. This completely broke with many of the former canons of the series by using the good Captain only as a minor character; Telford's notion was that in this way he could dramatize famous s-f short stories in such a way as to keep the kids, but perhaps attract some adult s-f fans as well. I did the first script for this, an adaptation of my story "The Box", with a great deal of assistance from Telford; and it was here that I was introduced to the five-liner. There are, it seems, three kinds of actors that can be used on TV according to union rules, each one of which costs the producer a fixed sum. Between major characters (who may say anything at any length) and extras (who are not allowed to open their mouths) there is the five-liner, who may deliver five lines and no more. The length of the line doesn't matter, as long as it is a single sentence; it's a good thing Henry James or William Faulkner weren't TV script-writers. It's surprising how much can be done with this device, though. Eight characters in "The Box" were five-liners, including my hero's wife; and nobody I have ever talked to who saw the show would believe that Meister's wife didn't talk as much as Meister himself, or any other of the major characters. It was a good show, and besides I got $300 for it, though it was only a half-hour script. Variety liked it too. Hot dog!

But the decline in Capt. Video's fortunes went remorselessly on. The other sponsors followed General Foods out the door like so many sheep, and soon nothing was left but public service announcements. At last Dumont forced Telford to cut the daily strophes to 15 minutes, but even this didn't help. Not even the candy bars were with it any more. The last story was Damon Knight's, a good one -- his second for the project and as far as I know the only one to be written for the 15-minute format.

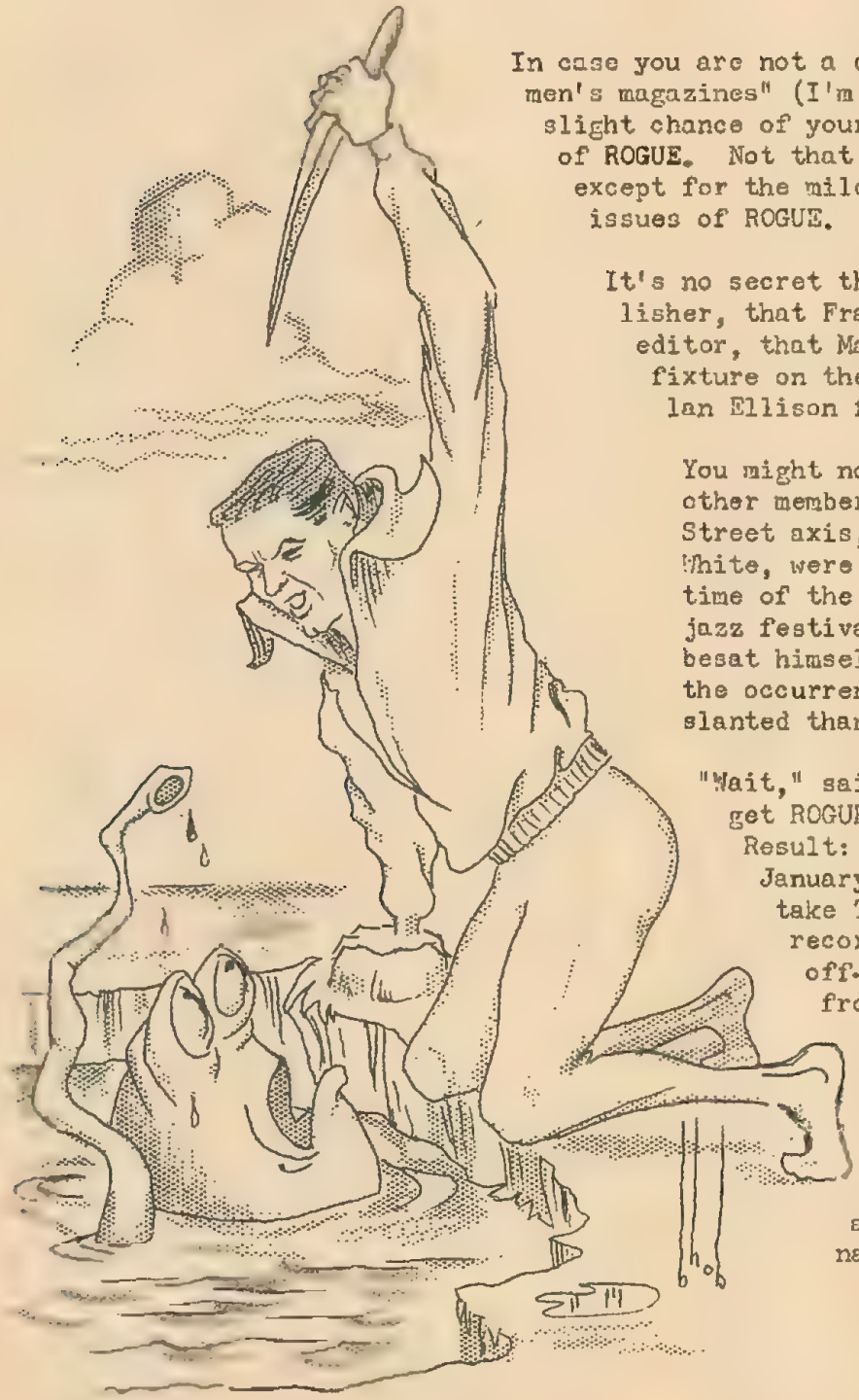
(The dropped 15 minutes of that half hour, by the way, were filled in by an exceedingly funny domestic comedy called "Ethel and Albert", slightly sick, largely ad-libbed and many years ahead of its time. It strongly resembled Mike Nichols and Elaine May. It died, too.)

Dumont kept Al on as the MC for a cartoon show, in which he used a robot prop left over from Knight's first script. As far as I know this still continues, though I wouldn't swear to it; and I believe Fred Scott is also still an announcer for Channel 5. But I miss the old days -- the show much more than the money, which was never very inspiring. It was fun. If Mike Deckinger never saw any of the stories that ran after Capt. Video's "Western agent" was dropped, he missed some good yarns, some of them a hell of a lot better than anything that ran on "Tales of Tomorrow." And I will further bet that nothing Rod Serling has done yet on "Twilight Zone" has been half as good as Walter Miller's stint for Capt. Video, which was not only pure-quill adult s-f, but remarkably poetic and moving throughout.

I still choke on cornflakes, now and then.



Spreading It Around



In case you are not a devotee of the "sophisticated men's magazines" (I'm not) there's more than a slight chance of your missing the January issue of ROGUE. Not that this is a particular sin, except for the mildly stfish tinge of many issues of ROGUE.

It's no secret that Bill Hamling is the publisher, that Frank M. Robinson is the current editor, that Mack Reynolds is practically a fixture on the contents page, and that Harlan Ellison formerly ran the zine.

You might not be aware, however, that the other members of the former Christopher Street axis, somebody named Mr. and Mrs. White, were in Newport last summer at the time of the beer riots and the aborted jazz festival. When they got home Ted besat himself and turned out a report of the occurrences rather more commercially slanted than is fanzine material.

"Wait," said Harlan, "I'll see if I can get ROGUE to take a look at it." Result: a nifty spread in the January 1961 issue that should take Ted from the ranks of the record-reviewers and on-again off-again columnists into the front line of jazz writers.

There's even a photo of Author White on the inside front cover of ROGUE.

The photographer: a strictly amateur 35-millimeter clicker named, um, err, uhhh...

...Dick Lupoff

All In COLOR For a Dime

PART 3 OF THE SERIES

A Bunch of Swell Guys

by Jim Harmon

Comradeship is the element that attracts us more than anything else in many adventure stories. We remember Treasure Island for the strange comradeship of Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver, and I LOVE A MYSTERY was the favorite radio program of many people because of the wonderful friendship of Jack, Doc, and Reggie. Psychologists may read signs of unorthodox impulses into this, but I expect the admiration of friendship is not necessarily wicked. In the comic book field, the almost overpowering example of friendship is the Justice Society of America.

The Justice Society were a "bunch of swell guys" as Johnny Thunder enthusiastically observed along about the half-dozenth issue of ALL-STAR COMICS, after they had sent the good-natured idiot on a monstrous snipe-hunt after a balmy self-styled "Killer" who printed newspaper headlines about his insidiously evil career on his basement press. Killer was harmless, yet Johnny managed to get himself thrown off a dock, bound hand and foot, towed on a line at the end of an airplane, locked in the trunk of a car... striking out on land, sea, and air. This isn't easy to do when you have a supernatural djinn-like Thunderbolt at your call whenever you say the magic words "Say you" (Sei-U), but Johnny was imbecilic enough to manage it, and to desperately require the aid of his pals in the JSA.

This swell bunch put Johnny Thunder through a pretty rigorous initiation before letting him join. The Flash was becoming an honorary member instead of a regular active member because he was not only going to be in FLASH COMICS now with Hawkman and others, but was getting his own magazine, ALL-FLASH, as well. The rule (then) was that no member with his very own comic book could maintain active membership. Johnny wanted to replace the Flash and was willing to go through all this woe to do it.

Fortunately, Thunderbolt brought Flash himself to save Johnny from the watery grave, but he had bumbled out of it himself some way, as he did the other traps, although Green Lantern, Hawkman, Spectre, Atom, Hourman, Dr. Fate, and Sandman tried to help him. Still, he blundered through on his own.

A few years ago a psychologist pointed out that the science fiction space operas then on the air were designed to prove the supremacy of society, the group, the family, over the individual. This is certainly on of the major problems of the twentieth century, philosophically, and I can't solve it. Group supremacy is probably wrong sociologically and right biologically. But whether right or wrong, it worked in the JSA stories, and according to Campbell and Heinlein, whatever works, particularly violence and brute force, is right. The JSA's never did much good alone -- in fact, they generally got themselves deeper into trouble when they branched out in the middle of the book. It wasn't until they got back together at the end that they could solved the problem or defeat the archvillain. Perhaps Johnny Thunder was just too individualistic in his collosal stupidity to need the aid of the group.

The cast of the Justice Society changed over the years. Of course, the JSA has recently been revived (and reasonably well revived and much better looking than Lazarus) and as the Justice League of America in the magazine of that title consists of original members Superman and Batman, and one-time secretary of the club, Wonder Woman, plus slightly altered versions of Flash and Green Lantern, old-timer but never previously a Justice boy, Aquaman, and the more recent creation J'onn J'onzz, Manhunter from Mars. This is certainly a respectable group of heroes, but many others have JSA's in the past. Comic books are probably only fun and not great literature, EC fans to the contrary, and for that reason societies are more complex than individuals -- in comic books.

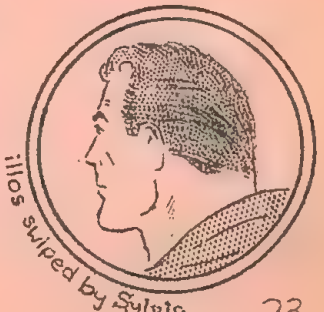
Hourman was a very early comic character. He seemed patterned more after the Shadow than after Superman, being not too super. Hourman received sixty minutes of super-strength (in the mortal quantity of an olympic weight-lifter) by taking a powder. It may have very well been that some sources objected to a children's hero who used drugs, because he disappeared abruptly.

Starman replaced Hourman. The red suit, Buck Rogers helmet, and Starwand which tapped the energy of the stars and acted much like Green Lantern's ring were more colorful than Hourman's black clothes and somber hood and cowl.

Of course the Spectre was an even more somber character, with his dead-white skin, putrescent green chorts, cape and cowl, and his black-shadowed eye sockets. Since the Spectre was dead -- a ghost in fact -- his appearance was quite proper. The Spectre was probably the most powerful comic character in the history of the field, outstripping even Superman. The Spectre had roughly the powers of God. He could control time and space, raise the dead, send men to hell, change size and shape, and was immortal and indestrucable and omnipotent. In at least one story, outside ALL-STAR, in MORE FUN COMICS, the Spectre was seen talking with God, man to man, equal to equal, as it were.

Dr. Fate, in his blue outfit and suit-of-armor helmet, had the same type of powers but never to the degree of the Spectre.

The Atom was a small man with a great deal of physical strength -- it said -- although he didn't seem much more powerful than Batman.



Another Batman-like character was Dr. Mid-Nite, who had the power to see in the dark, and blackout bombs to make it dark. He posed as blind Dr. McNider, almost completely paralleling the Black Bat, a pulp hero in Black Book Detective Magazine, who came first. The name wasn't too original either, in view of Captain Midnight and plain Midnight, a Spirit duplicator.

Several of these characters were for the birds.

Dr. Mid-Nite had an owl named Hooty, and Hawkman had a pet hawk, Big Red, leadeer of his flock of hawks. Hawkman could talk to birds, and fly with his huge wings and anti-gravity belt. He had another pet, Hawkgirl, but she was seldom in ALL-STAR.

The Sandman was another old character. Originally he wore a really repulsive green business suit, a yellow hat, and to complete the sickening color scheme, a purple cape. His mask was a gasmask. His weapon was a pocket-size harpoon pistol whose darts and lines were always coming in handy for wrapping up crooks and hitching rides on airplanes. Eventually, he became a copy of Batman in purple and yellow underwear with a Robin named Sandy. There was a dream motif in which the crooks dreamed Sandman was going to catch them. They were right.

A couple of other characters popped in and out of the Society: Mr. Terrific, a Mr. Belvedere type who could do anything from play the saxophone to engrave counterfeit five-dollar plates, and who wore the motto "Fair Play" over his pecotrals. And Wildcat, who looked like a wildcat, and was secretly meek, mild-mannered heavyweight champion of the world. And Black Canary, first a villainess in the Johnny Thunder strip in FLASH COMICS, then a co-hero, finally replacing Johnny altogether in both FLASH and ALL-STAR COMICS, where she was the only woman JSAer beside Wonder Woman.

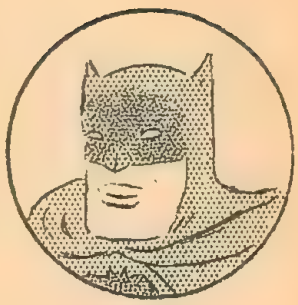
Wonder Woman is fairly well known, and continues to this day with relatively few changes except in quality from the original product. Superficially Wonder Woman is an Amazon who fell in love with a felled aviator, Steve Trevor, on Paradise Island, home of generations of manless Amazons (think about that) and who returned to civilization as Diana Prince, meek, mild-mannered Army officer, a nurse or secretary or something like that, who in her American Eagle bra and star-spangled blue panties got patriotic fast for a country she had never seen before. She was strong as Hercules and fast as Mercury (although she never argued those points with Captain Marvel, who also claimed those attributes). She had a mental radio, an invisible airplane shaped like a goose, and bracelets that could catch bullets. But underneath, I am seriously convinced that the strip was bondage fettish, perhaps lesbian pornography.

The same situations, even the same style of drawing, can be found in these early comics and in the high-priced under-the-counter items today. Wonder Woman was forever being bound by ropes, chains, he own magic lasso. There are scenes in which Wonder Woman uses a whip to drive a team of girls who are pulling her in a coach. In another scene, she grabs the bosom of the villainess' dress and threatens to march her naked and barefoot to Washington. The relations between the Amazons, the Holliday College girls, even the heroines and the villainesses suggest lesbiana beyond mere morbid speculation. The creator of the strip, Charles Moulton (really William Moulton Marsden), a psychologist and prime innovator of the lie detector, was an admitted believer in feminine superiority and I strongly suspect him and his artist, H.G. Peter, of unusual sexual tastes.

Superman, with is blue tights and red cape, his super-strength, invulnerability, x-ray vision and all, from his heritage as a native of the destroyed planet Krypton, surely doesn't need much description, nor does Batman with his normal human athletic abilities and clever tricks, and his boy aide, Robin, who always accompanies him -- everywhere but in ALL-STAR -- it would complement the cast too much.

The Flash and Green Lantern are back, but changed from their original selves. Green Lantern still has an occult power ring that can lift, repel, create objects...but

his unifrom is changed -- from the old red and green to green and black. GL is significant as virtually the only comic character noted for the strength of his mind -- his will power -- not his body. The name of his secret identity is different, as is the Flash's. The Flash no longer wears Mercury's helmet, but a regular suit of knit underwear, red, with the prescribed lightning flash across it. He is still as fast as ever -- but there is considerable doubt that he is faster than Superman, or even Wonder Woman, GL, or John Jones (the same as J'onn J'onzz; the latter is the "original Martian" spelling).



Just as GL changed his secret identity from Alan Scott to Hal Jordan, the Flash's "real" name is now Barry Allen, not Jay Garrick. Green Lantern's power-giving green lantern is no longer only a lantern made from a metiorite with occult properties, but a power machine given him by a dying member of an interstellar police force. And Hal Jordan is now a test pilot, where Alan Scott was first a railroad engineer, then a broadcasting engineer (as if the writer of the strip thought one kind of engineer was the same as any other) and finally a radio announcer. The Flash is still a research chemist in private life, but (uniquely) Barry Allen read a copy of the old FLASH COMICS with the Jay Garrick Flash featured, thought "Too bad it's only fiction," and proceeded to make it come true. Worlds within worlds. I'm sure Hugo Gernsback would be pleased by this instance of scientific inspiration from even low-level science fiction.

These are the heroes of the Justice Society (League). With such a cast, collosal mindwarping adventures could hardly prevent themselves from being created.

When Johnny Thunder wormed his way into the Justice Society in ALL-STAR #6, it was one of the least collosal and mindwarping adventures. It was not, in this dawn era, on soliffified story at all. Johnny's bleshing urge was used merely as a framework to hand individual adventures on. While Johnny disguised himself in a red wig, black mustache, scholarly cap and gown to track down the self-made "Killer" McPanzee, Flash went on what would be his last JSA adventure for some years and rounded up a gang of counterfeiters. Dr. Fate captured some car thieves. Sandman, Atom, Hourman, Green Lantern, and Hawkman nabbed some mundane crooks, and the Spectre committed homicide on the maker of headless monsters. At the end, Johnny tracks "Killer" to a ship at sea and makes McPanzee promise to be a good boy and he and his magic Thunderbolt take the ship back to the Justice Society clubroom. Thunderbolt delivers the steamship to the front steps of the building. Always leave 'em laughing.

By the tenth issue, at least one general theme pervaded the storyline. In this one, an unnamed scientist who looks like Einstein is working on a defense against enemy bombs for America. In his spare moments he has also invented a time machine. The JSA's go into the future to get the secret there (but "Find the Sculptor," as Sam Hines would say), leaving the honorary members, Flash and GL, to guard the scientist and his colleagues. Trouble arises immediately for Hawkman when the cops of the future don't believe him when he says he is the famous legendary figure of the twentieth century. "Can't blame them. Suppose Washington appeared suddenly before a policeman back in 1942," Hawkman muses modestly. "He'd be sent to a nuthouse...Wow! Hope they don't do that to me."

Is that a cue? Of course it's a cue. They put him away. He tries fighting his way out, but futuremen have been bred to virtual supermen, and they toss him into a barred cell. But Hawkman remembers "My belt of Ninth Metal resists gravity...." Pulling against the bars, the belt of Ninth Metal (do you suppose the writer originally meant nth metal ?) bends them apart.

Making his escape into panels that become very Alex Raymondish in style, the winged crusader learns from the televisabrary the location of various parts of the bomb defense formula. Hald, a future cop who has researched the JSA, knows Hawkman is on the level and helps him get one part of the formula. Hawkman knocks out an interfering cop by kicking him in the jaw, since "the muscles of my legs are about ten times more powerful than my arms" and brings back the information to the other members.

Sandman goes down into the mines of the future for his part of the formula; Starman, into a city built atop giant trees; Dr. Fate, to a new Atlantis under the sea; Dr. Mid-Nite performs an operation in complete darkness in the lush resort of the Sahara to prove his identity and gain access to the formula; and Atom goes to Sky City, home of giants who put him into a bird cage before he can gly away, first picking up the secret formula section.

Finally, Johnny Thunder's trouble is opposite that of the rest. The Defenders recognize him as the legendary hero of the past and believe he can do anything -- even to capturing Black Butch, the most monstrous criminal alive. But finally even Johnny gets back alive with his section of the formula. The Flash breezes back and asks why everybody hasn't left, but Green Lantern explains that they could return at any hour, even the very one they left.

ALL-STAR delved into propaganda in #22 and #24, but a rather elevated brand. The goddess Conscience materializes in the clubroom of the JSA because "You despair because you wish to make men understand their fellows?" She proposes to send them into the past. "You will remain physically as you are now, but...the hates and fears of the past will be yours to overcome!" Hawkman defends the first caveman artist from the stone-age anti-eggheads who fear his pictures. Starman leads Spartan slaves to war against the Persians to "convince mankind that slaves are not born, but made." Johnny Thunder shows serfs have guts by winning a knightly joust. And in witch-hunting Salem, the Atom is taken for a demon (in his costume) while he thinks "They don't know me as Nathaniel Pratt whom they've known all their lives! Which shows how much they're qualified to judge anyone as wizard or witch." Dr. Mid-Nite is unjustly taken for an aristo during the French Revolution because of his fancy clothing. The Spectre protects an inventor from a mob who fear automation.

They have learned, as Conscience says, "With understanding, all fear will vanish!"

Conscience returns when the Justice Society try to convince Dick Amber that there is moral justification in fighting Germany. Since fandom has Hugoed Heinlein for his glorification of war, "Starship Trooper," I'm sure fans will approve this sentiment. But you will probably recognize as comic-book pap the final statement:

> "Germans have been taught that war is purifying, an ennobling experience... something mystic and wonderful...but one of our great American generals was right when he said 'WAR IS HELL!'"

To prove it, Dick Amber is taken through a number of incarnations by the All-Stars. Hawkman proves to Amber as Reinhard, a teutonic knight, that his fellows are not chivalrous; Atom protects him from Bismarck's guards after Dick as Helmut von Conrad decides more killing won't solve the problem created by the chancellor's treachery, and so on, until Johnny Thunder shows up Hitler's master race theories at the beginning of the movement in the thirties. Convinced, Dick goes on to become a war hero against the Germans.

With this issue, #24, the Superman-National Comics group temporarily split in two for some obscure business reason. ALL-STAR was an All-American Publication, separated from the magazines that published some of the JSA members. Superman and Batman were dropped even as honorary members, and Starman and the Spectre were replaced by Wildcat and Mr. Terrific.

One of the last issues with the old cast -- #21 -- was perhaps the very best of all the ALL-STARs, and one of my favorite comic books. The story is called "The Man Who Relived His Life." Joe Fitch, an old handyman around the lab of of Prof Everson, the inventor of the time machine that sent the All-Stars after the bomb defense (so he has a name after all!), has voluntarily sacrifieed his life to prove which of two formulas is the one to cure a "disease that annually costs thousands of lives." It was the other formula -- this one is a slow but deadly poison. Joe has done a lot of wrong things in his life, and he wants the Justice Society to change his past. Yet, as they go back, each member seems to fail.

Joe does help rob a turn-of-the-century bank. But only to help Hawkman catch the crooks, it turns out. Sandman seems to fail to stop Joe from fatally shooting his rival for singer Lily D'Arcy, Mike McCullum, in a theatre box just before the San Francisco earthquake, but Sandman discovers it was really a political rival who fired the shot, although Joe still thinks he did. He also thinks he blew up a saloonful of people out West, although Starman caught the real bombers. Dr. Mid-Nite convinces Joe not to desert under World War I fire and let his lieutenant be crippled, and in the present, the lieutenant recovers from his shell-shock fixation that he cannot walk. Dr. Fate proves Joe didn't really kill a newsman during Prohibition, that it was the work of a rum-runner. Johnny Thunder convinces Joe to keep an election honest, saying "Strong-arm methods are finished in this town!" as he cracks a politico over the head with a baseball bat. Joe's conscience is cleared, and Lily, who has read a news story on him, shows up and marries him on his death bed. "Even though a man is weak, if he fights to overcome his weaknesses -- and wins -- he deserves the best!" says Hawkman.

And then, "He's gone," says Professor Iverson.

"I wonder -- where?" asks Hawkman.*

It took only a few issues before ALL-STAR came back into the Superman-DC group, and Superman and Batman were reinstated as honorary members, and in fact took active part in one adventure in #36, in 1947. The story was "Five Drowned Men." It opened with a prolog in which six men sit around a western campfire discussing the legend of Koehaha, the Stream of Ruthlessness. Men drowned in this stream return to life without conscience. Stymes, the white-haired, stuttering host, asks the men what they would do without consciences. The reporter would turn to blackmail, the scientist would unleash the secrets of destruction he knows, the private detective would be a master criminal, the architect would destroy the modern architecture he hates, and the archeologist would rob and kill to get the archeological treasures he loves. Stymes leaves the men sleeping in the old stream bed -- and Koehaha returns.

Batman captures the detective, Flash traps the reporter, Hawkman grabs the archeologist, while Dr. Mid-Nite survives the inventions of the now-mad scientist, and Superman repairs the damage of the Wrecker and nabs him...but all have help from a stuttering man!

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*I wonder why -- with that time-travel gadget around -- the JSA didn't just go back to the beginning of the story and tell Joe which formula to take.

-- Dick Lupoff

Meanwhile, Green Lantern has tracked down Stymes and learns his story -- how the five tricked him into thinking he was being haunted by a dog he had poisoned, turning his hair white and causing his stutter. After attempting to kill GL he escapes. The entire JSA trail him back to Koehaha, where he knows the five men will return to drink again. He tries to blow them up, but the All-Stars save the men, but not Stymes who is caught in his own explosion.

The Flash analyzes the water, discovering it contains so much free oxygen no one can actually drown in it, and it contains habis indica, a drug that deadens a man's conscience. Wonder Woman assures the five that they will get off with pleas of temporary insanity, and Superman shoves a mountain onto the stream bed, destroying Koehaha forever.

Along about #38, in 1948, comics began running out of pages and there was no longer room for the traditional JSA format, a few opening pages and the ending involving all members, with a story each for every member. The JSA's began operating in teams of two or three, with only stretches of a few panels each for the individual members. In this issue, the story begins with history's greatest villains -- Nero, Captain Kidd, Goliath, Cesare Borgia, Genghis Khan, and Attila the Hun -- killing all the male Justice Society members. This strikes me as symbolic of more than just a comic book story, for about this time the comic books carrying the JSA members outside ALL-STAR began dying off, and ALL-STAR was their last stand, the home of the tired warrior. Their FAPA.

But Black Canary reported the deaths to Wonder Woman, who gathered up the corpses and took them to Paula's secret laboratory, where they were resurrected by the Purple Healing Ray, and promptly wiped up the baddies. Incidentally, there is a rather interesting background to Paula and her laboratory, and much could be said of her liaison with Wonder Woman, but I will leave that to the writer of the article in this series devoted to WW and her associates.

The JSA went on for something close to twenty issue more with fair science-fictional adventures, but somehow nothing to live up to the earlier issues.

In those earlier issues they had met and defeated the creatures painted into life with the magic paint from Atlantis, and they suffered the Dreams of Madness that drove all the JSA's mad, -- except Johnny Thunder, whose nightmare drove him sane -- until he got kicked in the head.

The Dreams of Madness were a scheme of the Brain Wave, the Justice Society's arch foe. He originally turned up in ALL-STAR #15 as "The Man Who Created Images" -- images that seemed like real people and things. In ALL-STAR #17 he reduced the All-Stars to six inches in height each, but they foiled his plans -- to make a short story short.

The Brain Wave also turned up as a member of the Injustice Society with the Wizard, the Thinker, and others.

The most gruesome of monsters was Solomon Grundy, a Frankenstein-like creature with a monomaniacal hatred of GL.

The Justice Society survived all sorts of perils, being shot off to different planets by the Axis in World War II, even serving a hitch in the Army as the Justice Battalion; but it couldn't survive the trend away from masked crime fighters and toward comics with no set characters, but pulp-level sf and mystery stories. ALL-STAR #55 is the last JSA comic I have. After #55 ALL-STAR COMICS became ALL-STAR WESTERN.

Then...

The March, 1959, issue of THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD presented "Justice League of America." The members were Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, from the old Justice Society, plus Aquaman, J'onn J'onzz, and the revived/revised Flash and Green Lantern.

The story concerns Starro the Conqueror, a giant starfish from space who creates replicas of himself from ordinary earthly starfish in order to conquer the world. Aquaman spies this on his rounds and flashes a signal to the JLA. Superman is busy battling a swarm of giant meteors, preventing them from destroying the earth, (you get almost as uncomfortable a feeling about the safety of the earth from reading comic books as you do from newspapers,) and Batman has to keep two of his arch enemies from joining forces and looting Gotham City, and this piddling affair keeps him also from the meeting. But Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Flash, and J'onn J'onzz show up, and take on the giant starfish and shrink them down to size.

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA is by all means the most successful recreation of one of the comics from our childhood. Garner F. Fox, one of DC's original scripters does the stories and all that have appeared in the revival so far are head and shoulders above other contemporary comics. A recent glee-provoking note in the letter column promised appearances by more of the old members. Of course no comics of today can ever capture the magic we knew as children -- we have changed more than they have. But the new JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, now in a series of its own outside BRAVE AND THE BOLD, comes close.

Science fiction fans seem to have the ability to think on two levels (at least). Many fans capable of writing or at least reading and appreciating thoroughly adult science fiction and general literature are still comic book fans.

The Biblical idea of "putting away childish things" has little appeal to me; it smacks of a rather snide and vainglorious pride in mere chronology. It demands a relinquishment of all naivete, all simplicity, all appreciation of simple pleasures. It demands the smothering of that old science-fictional ideal, the Sense of Wonder.

Perhaps the highest form of sophistication is not to emphasize but to admit whatever genuine quality of innocence is still within you.

"The Big Red Cheese," Part 1 of this series, brought a flood of enthusiastic letters from Lummox fans. It also brought a flood of corrections to the data in that article, and a good deal of other information, either brand-new or long-forgotten by me. The result: "Shaz-urk!", a supplement to the original article.

Firstoff, some general information about the Marvel series of comics. The previous article named Otto Binder as the regular scripter of Captain Marvel and Will Lieberson as the editor of the comics in which he appeared. Actually, Lieberson was listed as Executive Editor; Wendell Crowley is the man generally listed as Editor, although at various times the editorial staff listings included J.B. Magill, Roy Ald, Mercedes Shull, Stanley Kauffman, and Rod Reed. C.C. Beck, Chief Artist, was succeeded by Al Jetter in the latter days. And the ubiquitous Jack Kirby did the first issue of CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES. A Consulting Editor and Editorial Advisory Board of

prominent educators, psychologists, etc, were also given prominent display, but they were obvious window-dressing, as was the "wholesome entertainment - approved reading" seal which graced many Fawcett comics.

The first Comix Cards series, far from being "dropped after only two had been printed," actually ran far beyond that number. Mary Marvel, for instance, appeared on Comix Card #24.

Circulation of the Marvel comics was very high. CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES, the bellwether of the group, proudly called itself the possessor of the "Largest Circulation of any Comic Magazine"...during the era of SUPERMAN's 1,400,000 circulation. So successful was CMA that in 1943 it was a triweekly and in 1946 it became a semimonthly briefly, before slipping back to a monthly schedule.

A number of publications containing Marvel material was left out of the article. These include:

CAPTAIN MARVEL THRILL BOOK -- an over-size one-shot. This appeared in 1941; it cost 10¢ and had a color cover but black-and-white interiors. It was apparently a trial-balloon for CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES which followed.

DAISY HANDBOOK #2 -- also black-and-white, this miniature publication reprinted from both the Fawcett and National lines. It was sold on a mail-order basis by the Daisy air-rifle people, who still owe me HANDBOOK #1 for which I sent a dime but which I never received. I was so mad I refused to send for the second one.

HOLIDAY COMICS -- another Fawcett "fat" comic, designed, like GIFT COMICS and XMAS COMICS to catch seasonal markets.

CAPTAIN MARVEL AND THE RETURN OF THE SCORPION -- This was one of four "Dime Action Novels" issued by Fawcett in 1941. They were much like Big Little Books, and were given wide house-ad play in Fawcett's comics. Aside from CM, the other DANs featured Bulletman, Minuteman, and Spy Smasher. An odd aspect of "Return of the Scorpion" is that the Scorpion was returning from the movie serial ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL. Pat and I have seen that serial since the first XERO appeared, and I must apologize for lack of adjectives to tell how great it is.

As for the three comic-book serials mentioned in the article, there were actually more than that number, but most were quite short and unimportant. Incidentally, to close out the topic of those serials, two facts: Oggar has two g's in it. And the source's of IBAC's powers were Ivan (terror), Borgia (cunning), Attila (fierceness), and Caligula (cruelty). Obviously an unfair match.

The actual story content of the Captain Marvel series bears some further discussion; here's something on a few characters. The three "other" Billy Batsons. Tall, Fat, and Hill, became Lieutenants Marvel and, with the Captain, formed Captain Marvel's Squadron of Justice. Let's see now, that makes the SoJ, JSA, JLA. Guess it's a good idea.

A good villain overlooked was Mr. Atom, a giant nuclear-powered man-of-metal, a sort of walking incarnation of the misused atom. After a truly epic battle with the Cheese he was chained deep underground...even Captain Marvel could not destroy him. Later, Mr. Atom was freed by outer-space invaders, but was apparently (not unequivocally, however) destroyed in a deep-space nuclear blast.

King Kull was another villain, a vicious giant proto-man who had been preserved deep in the earth since earliest times. His goal was to destroy humanity and restore his own race. In CMA #137 King Kull gives life to the seven deadly sins, statues which had long stood in the Hall of Statues outside Shazam's chamber. Shazam explains to Billy "Those were not mere statues, but seven evil gods whom I defeated and turned to stone long ago! But now, released from bondage, they can bring about the downfall of mankind! King Kull has formed his own Evil Olympus with the seven sinful gods! You must stop them ore the world is doomed!"

"Yes, Sire!" answere the boy newscaster, "Captain Marvel and.I will do our job! We'll find the Evil Olympus somehow!"

Back at the ~~////~~ IRT, the Seven Sins and Kull are making sin bombs, which will cause people to overflow with hate, greed, envy, pride, selfishness, laziness, and injustice. The Big Red Oaf finds the Evil Olympus, but "Whoa! That tricky beastman has a photo-electric alarm system rigged up here! If I set it off he may escape!" Marvel Shazams into Billy, who "Can just wriggle under the beams! CM would never have made it!" He overhears Kull triumphing "The human race will fight tooth and nail like jungle beasts to the last man! Then I'll have triumphed! HO $_{H}A^{A}_{A}$!" Billy thinks, "Holy Moley! Now is the time! I'll rush out and say..." But as Billy runs forward he trips over a stray bomb (so help me!) and "SHAZ...OOF" Clonk! "A snooper! GRAB HIM!"

"Ho ha!" gloats Kull over Billy. "My life-ray gun brought stone statues to life! It can also do the reverse! I'll turn you to <u>stone</u>!" But brave Billy never gives up, no matter how great the odds against him! And, to synopsize: Chomp! YOW! Bop! "My gun..!" "Grrr!" "SHAZAM!" POW! <u>Bong</u>! "GHAA!" (scene shifts) "Well done, my son!"

Well, on to Captain Marvel Junior. About the only major points raised here were the fact that Captain Nazi was responsible for Freddy's crippling, and that there was a Sivana Junior in the series. He looked like his dad, except for hair and argyle sox!

CM Junior shared Captain Marvel's power, and thus gained his attributes from the same "gods": Solomon (wisdom), Hercules (strength), Atlas (stamina), Zeus (power), Achilles (courage), and Mercury (speed). A number of people have taken issue with my calling these six "gods." All I can say is that they were called gods in the stories... ...sometimes. Other times they were called men, and others, heroes. You pays your dime and you takes your pick.

Mary Marvel has a set of Shazam goddesses, but they were incorrectly listed in the first article. The correct roll is : Selena (grace), Hippolyta (strength), Ariadne (skill), Zephyrus (fleetness), Aurora (beauty), and Minerva (wisdom). Mary Batson was not only Billy's sister, she was his twin! For respectability's sake, however, she acquired a step-mother, while Billy lived with his valet Steamboat and Freddy resided at Mrs. Wagner's Boarding House. Incidentally, Mary traded her boots for a pair of rather cute golden slippers toward the end of the series, and changed her ridiculous baggy dress for a rather more attractive one, lowered neck and all. She even started to grow up a tiny bit, and would surely be a fetching lass today if she'd lived. Ah well, there <u>is</u> Supergirl.

Mary added a bit of Shazam-lore when the wizard appeared and told her that for one day each thousand years he lost his powers, and hence the Marvels would do likewise. By the end of the time Mary was tied down and frantically Shazamming while a pistol was aimed point-blank at her. Of course the time ended just in...time. And she changed to her invulnerable self. On another occasion Uncle Dudley received Shazam powers for twenty-four hours, and from time to time other twisted- and/or lost-powers stories appeared. Unlike modern National comics, they were not done to death.

At Home with the Marvels

part 1.2 of the series *by Otto Binder*

You Lupoffs have had an experience I never did -- seeing the complete run of the Captain Marvel serial. I only caught a few chapters. Where in the world do they run such things complete?

Now, let me sincerely commend you for a remarkable resume of the Cap'n's adventures. Your insight into many of the reasons we did certain phases of it is almost psychic. We did deliberately decide CM mustn't be too all-powerful for lack of suspense. Sivana was a comics-tailored Fu Manchu, although he was really modelled after the then-ubiquitous "mad scientist." And we did rack our collective brains (Lieberson, Crowley, Beck the artist, and myself) to get the big twist of Mr. Mind being a worm. In fact, up till a couple chapters before this revelation, we hadn't yet decided what he would be. The worm bit suddenly popped out of my mouth (I hope my memory is accurate that it was my mouth) and the others said crazy, man, that's it. All of us had more real slobbering fun with that serial than anything else we did. Somehow, Mr. Mind just wrote himself once he appeared in Beck's inimitable version with his rubber-faced frowns and leers. He became more real to us than such villains as Black Adam, Oggar, or even Sivana. The World's Maddest Scientist, however, ran a close second in our book and he was good for reappearances throughout the eleven-year career of the Cap'n.

You give me too much credit, however. To set the record straight, I did not dream up Sivana. When I began writing CM scripts, along about a year after his debut, Sivana was already there, plus Beautia. He was the combined product of Bill Parker and Charles C. Beck, the original writer-artist team that started the strip. Your comments as to "direct imitation" of Superman I will give a no-comment tag, as this was the basis on which Superman-DC sued in 1951-51. The case never reached court. In a private settlement, Fawcett agreed to drop CM and pay an undisclosed amount. Though not required to do so, they decided to drop all their comics, which left us all high and dry. Sales had been slipping and they decided to go in other directions -- pocketbooks, one-shot how-to-do-its, etc.

A month later I was writing for our former rivals, DC. I'm not sure whether you knew this, as your article seems to make no mention of Superman scripts written by me. Anyway, I did switch from the ghost of CM to the alive Superman, which is not as unusual as it seems, in that Superman's editor, Mort Weisinger, had bought many of my sf pulp stories long before comics existed. Thus we were old friends and he invited me to write for him (I had actually done some comics for him several years before but stopped when the first suit-petition was brought forth as it wouldn't be politic to work for the two firms involved).

So for the past eight years I've written Superman, almost as long as I did for CM. Besides Superman stories, I've written Superboy, Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane, etc. I wrote the first issues of both the

OTTO BINDER
(Copied from photo in Space World)

latter, but the ideas were strictly Mort's, not mine. He just chose me as the writer to launch them.

Incidentally, turning the clock back again, I wrote the first issues (and almost all the stories afterwards) for both Mary Marvel and the Marvel Family. As you guessed, though, I had little to do with Captain Marvel Jr, originated by Ed Herren and drawn by Mac Raboy, who now does Flash Gordon.

Some statistics might interest you. I kept records of all comics scripts I did:

Captain Marvel.....529
Captain Marvel Jr...161
Mary Marvel.....152
Marvel Family.....144

A grand total of 986 "Marvel" stories (besides such others as Ibis, Golden Arrow, and such non-Marvel types). These were between the years 1941 and 1953. Of the Jon Jarl short-story series in CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES, I cranked out 83 science fiction tales all told. I also wrote the CAPTAIN MARVEL STORYBOOK.

By the way, perhaps you are unaware of my doings at DC. Besides the ones mentioned already, I wrote the Tommy Tomorrow series in ACTION COMICS for several years, toaling some 59 before it was transferred out of Mort's books to the editors of a different book, which is they work there.

Also, before I became Mort's "exclusive" writer, I wrote for Julius Schwartz -- I'm sure you know his name as an old-time sf fan -- who is a DC editor of various comics including MYSTERY IN SPACE and STRANGE ADVENTURES. I did probably a hundred for him (my records are not yet totalled on this) before I was yanked into Mort's preserve. To complete the story on my science-fiction writings in the comics, I also did a series for Ziff-Davis, for Standard Pubs, for Gaines, and a few other odd titles (in the day when they totalled over 500) to the tune of several hundred sf scripts.

But even after some eight years I still have a warm spot in my cardiac region for those gone-forever days of writing the Big Red Cheese. Incidentally, besides Lieberson, the editor of the CM group, Wendell Crowley, had a great deal to do with the exploits and evolution of the Marvel saga. He helped a lot in working up Mr. Mind, Sivana stories, Mr. Tawky Tawny, and the Marvel Family tales. Also C.C. Beck, the artist, threw in many inspirational ideas. His artistry, I always thought, had a spark of genius. He seemed to be sparked off by my scripts into doing sensationally great works, and I in turn would be further excited imaginatively to new gimmicks. We had quite a superb team going for many years, until destiny decreed limbo for CM.

My brother Jack also did a certain amount of the Marvel tales, notably Mary Marvel, plus whole issues of CM in his shop of artists when Beck couldn't handle it all. We've all sort of scattered, like galaxies in the expanding universe. Will Lieberson did some freelancing, is now the editor of MONSIEUR. Wendell Crowley went into the lumber business. Beck moved to Florida and is doing commercial advertising. My brother Jack is in upstate New York doing statues and various exhibit pieces for the playland parks near Lake George.

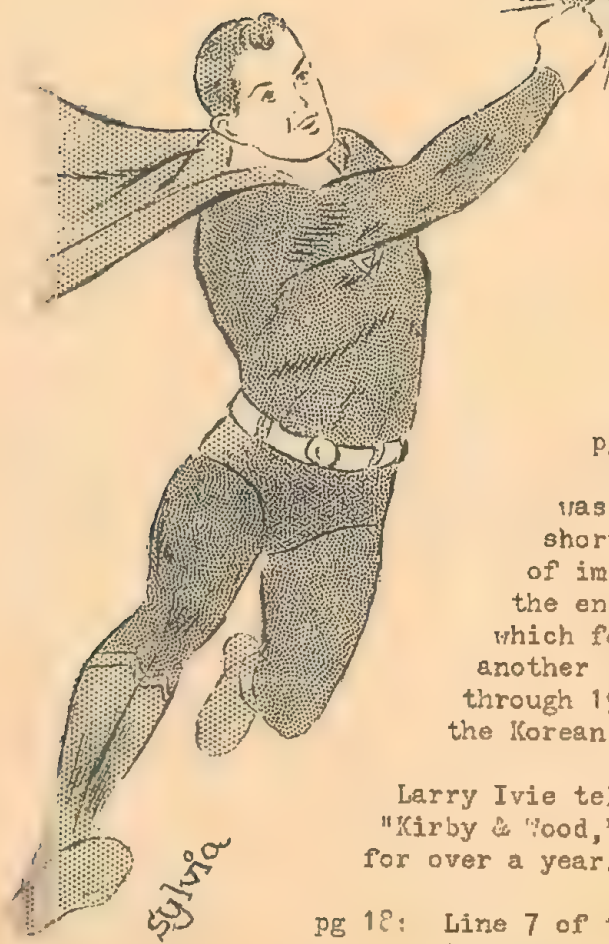
Your comment on Bizarro being somewhat of a take-off on Levram is another curious "psychic insight" -- I wrote the first and all succeeding Bizarro tales. Yet the original idea came from Mort, without any thought of Levram, I'm sure. But I suppose my rendition of Bizarro partook of Levram, somehow subconsciously, in my own mind.

Somehow, this all seems of a remote past that itself seems part of another world.

PART 2.1 OF THE SERIES ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME

BY TED WHITE

SON OF THE SPAWN OF M.C. GAINES



In writing my article for the Lupoffs, I unleashed all my dormant enthusiasms for those Fine Old Comics of Yore, and in a fantastic fit I took Larry Ivie with me to Falls Church, where I invaded the Ancestral Home, spent two days sorting out my collection, and left to return for New York with a sizable portion of it. (Not all of it have I elected to keep -- I have a large number of rare titles for sale, if anyone is interested.)

The result of all this, plus many conversations with Larry Ivie, and my rediscovery of my only file copy of The Facts Behind Superman, which I wrote in 1954, is that I have discovered many errors in my original article -- which was, as you'll remember, founded largely upon a hazy memory which had grown hazier than I like to prefer.

Thus: Errata and Additions:

pg 17: The typist left a line out following line 7 in the first paragraph. "Captain America" was the first of the fighting patriots, introduced shortly before WWII, and he established quite a line of imitators, most of which joined him in extinction at the end of the war. The "first of the adventure groups" which followed on line 8 referred to "The Boy Commandos," another Simon & Kirby WWII product, but one which survived through 1949. If it had been continued a little longer, the Korean War might well have revived its popularity.

Larry Ivie tells me that although "Sky Masters" is still signed "Kirby & Wood," Wally Wood has had nothing to do with the strip for over a year.

pg 18: Line 7 of the second paragraph should read, "...and lent its initials..."

pg 19: I was wrong about "Superman" appearing in the newspapers before the comic magazines. "Actually," says Larry Ivie, "Siegel and Shuster used copies of ACTION COMICS as samples when trying to peddle the strip to the newspaper syndicates." There was still considerable swapping of stories and art between the two media, and many obvious paste-ups. A quote from The Facts Behind Superman is appropriate:

> M.C. Gaines (now dead) told of first seeing Superman when he was getting out POPULAR COMICS for Dell. He turned it down, but in December 1937 he wrote Siegel and asked for the material again. He had an idea of using it in a weekly tabloid, but this idea was also dropped. Then the publishers of DETECTIVE COMICS...decided to bring out another mag, ACTION COMICS. They queried Gaines on what material he had available, and he suggested Superman. The rest is history; ACTION COMICS was a sellout and in May 1939 appeared SUPERMAN QUARTERLY MAGAZINE. By 1940 the SUPERMAN magazine had a circulation of 1,300,000.

Regarding the Eisner creation which National sued out of existence, I wrote, in the same book:

> Batman was the second super-hero /actually, the second costume-hero, inasmuch as he had no super-powers/. And herein lies a story. For published almost simultaneously with the May 1939 issue of DETECTIVE COMICS (the issue in which Batman first appeared) was WONDER COMICS (published by Fox Features) with Wonder Man. This was by Will Eisner, creator of the Spirit. National sued, and forced Fox to pull Wonder Man out of WONDER COMICS. The name /of the comic was subsiquently/ changed to WONDERWORLD COMICS.

pg 20: Apparently the super-character-group lasted in LEADING COMICS at least through issue #14, and possibly (but not likely) through one more issue.

The temporary split of the AA line from National took place slightly later and longer than I had thought. The "AA" emblem replaced the "DC" emblem on the covers of the magazines oriented around "The Flash," "Green Lantern," and "Wonder Woman," beginning with the February 1945 issues. They lasted through the November 1945 issues. After that, all but the PICTURE STORIES titles (Gaines' pet brainchildren) were reintegrated into the "Superman-DC" group.

Fourth paragraph, line 8: the typist changed the history of STAR-SPANGLED COMICS a bit; actually it became a war-story mag. It was never a vehicle for funny animals. Both it and ALL-AMERICAN MEN OF WAR, after continuing the numbering of the previous titles for a few issues were forced (by the Post Office, presumably) to begin numbering the new magazines as new titles; strangely, the new numbering was not consistent with the actual number of issues since the title changes (the fifth war-story issue, for instance, was numbered #4, etc).

As to the actual last issues of the various comics...:

ALL-AMERICAN COMICS' last issue was #102, October, 1948. With #103 it became ALL-AMERICAN WESTERN. "Johnny Thunder," a western strip with secret identities (no relation to the strip of the same name which once appeared in FLASH COMICS and mutated into "The Black Canary") began with issue #100, and was continued as the headline feature of the western title. (Then ALL-AMERICAN later became a war-story mag, the strip was put in ALL-STAR WESTERN, where it still remains.)

FLASH COMICS' last issue was #104, February, 1949. The title was suspended for ten years, until the February-March, 1959, issue, which was published as THE FLASH #105.

ALL-STAR COMICS' last issue as a vehicle for "The Justice Society of America" was #57, February-March, 1951. The April-May issue, #58, was retitled ALL-STAR WESTERN. Incidentally, the "JSA" was introduced in ALL-STAR #3.

ALL-FLASH apparently folded with issue #32, December-January, 1947-48. But I'm not sure; there may have been a few more issues.

GREEN LANTERN's first incarnation apparently ended with the March-April, 1949, issue, #37.

The last COMIC CAVALCADE I have which features the super-heroes was #29, October-November, 1948. There may have been one or two more issues before the title became a 15¢ anthology of funny animals. But I doubt it.

SENSATION COMICS dropped its regular costume-character features save "Wonder Woman" and became a romance-story comic with issue #96, March-April, 1950. (This also marked a change from monthly to bi-monthly publication.) The logo was changed, and the "WW" strip became as preoccupied with artificial romance problems as the rest of the mag. With issue #99, "WW" let her problems with "love" take a lesser place in her affairs, and "Astra, Girl of the Future" was intoduced, a science-fictional mystery strip. Gradually crime was introduced as a sub-motif in the other romance features. With issue #106, the page-count was reduced from 52 to 36 pages, and one of the romance features was dropped. Issue #107, January-February, 1952, ushered in a new theme: the horror story, as more gently treated by National. "Wonder Woman" and the other previous features were dropped in favor of sets of plain stories and one wandering feature, "Johnny Peril." ("Johnny Peril" began as an outgrowth of Howard Purcell's "Just A Story" feature in COMIC CAVALCADE: that feature, which used off-beat, almost Eisnerish stories, became "Johnny Peril Tells Just A Story," and later "Johnny Peril's Surprise Story," and was moved from COMIC CAVALCADE to the rear of ALL-STAR until that title became a western. "Johnny Peril" next cropped up as a replacement intrigue-adventure feature in the last issue of DANGER TRAIL, and then lay in suspension until his revamped appearance in SENSATION.) With issue #110, July-August, 1952, the title was changed to SENSATION MYSTERY, and prefaced with the headline: "This is the Dark Doorway to--". The last issue was #116, July-August, 1953.

pg 21: Actually, "The Star-Spangled Kid" lasted well into "Robin the Boy Wonder"'s tenure in STAR-SPANGLED COMICS. Towards the end, the Kid was edged out by his sister, Merry, and the last several stories featured her as "Merry, the Girl of 1,000 Gimicks." They were drawn by Winslow Mortimer, of newspaper "David Crane" fame.

Third paragraph: Actually, Superman and Batman were featured together for the first time (it says here -- the editors at National apparently forgot their appearances together in ALL-STAR COMICS) in SUPERMAN #76, in "The World's Mightiest Team." Shortly thereafter, they were again featured, as the first of a regular series, in the just-10¢ WORLD'S FINEST COMICS, following the rationale of the story in SUPERMAN #76. (Batman has showed up in "Superman" stories a number of times since to help him preserve his secret identity, and serve other useful little chores.)

Sixth paragraph: I had the origin of "The Flash" wrong. Actually, he inhaled the fumes of some "hard water" (!) he was experimenting with, when the chemical retorts were accidentally broken. I think Gardner Fox must have been thinking of <u>heavy</u> water...

Seventh paragraph: Green Lantern was introduced in ALL-AMERICAN COMICS #16. His sidekick, Doiby Dickles, was introduced in issue #27, and he found out the identity of GL in #35. GL's original job as Alan Scott was as a radio engineer. However, in the course of the strip he became an announcer, and finally a producer-executive.*

pg 22: "Wonder Woman" was introduced in ALL-STAR COMICS #8, December-January, 1941-42, with the origin story. She began as a regular feature in SENSATION COMICS #1, January, 1942.

pg 23: Garner F. Fox is also writing the new "Justice League" stories in JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, and the second issue of that mag credits him with the creation of the original "Justice Society."

pg 25: Fourth paragraph: My error; "Aquaman" was never part of the group in LEADING COMICS.

And that's about it. I may have been a trifle pessimistic regarding the future revival of other National characters: AQUAMAN has appeared in SHOWCASE COMICS, which means that he's being given a chance for a mag of his own. HAWKMAN is being similarly test-run in BRAVE AND THE BOLD, with the writing-drawing team of Fox and Joe Kubert producing the (re)introductory adventure.

The revival of "The Flash" may have started something; the supercharacters seem to be snowballing in popularity:

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*This occupation business seems to go on and on...see the original article by Ted, Jim Harmon's article in this issue, and now further comment from Ted. Further, and I hope final clarification on the point comes from Jim again, as follows:

> I might say on Alan Scott's profession that it changed constantly, or rather, evolved. He started as a railroad engineer (the green lantern was a RR prop), then as if the writer thought one kind of engineer was the same as another, he became a radio station engineer, then a radio announcer, then a TV announcer, finally a TV newscaster. Of course, now the Green Lantern is Hal Jordan, a test pilot. So far as I know, this is the only major comic character whose profession changed ...with the possible exception of Wonder Woman who made the slight change from Army nurse to Army secretary. Or maybe it wasn't so slight. The Flash's profession remained the same -- chemist -- when his civilian name changed.

Okay now? --RL

The AICFAD Style Sheet

A gratifying number of people have offered to contribute article to the"All in Color for a Dime" series of articles on comic books. Some would-be contributors may have been scared off, however, because they're not sure as to just what is wanted in these articles. Worse, a couple of hardy souls went to the trouble of researching and writing articles intended for the series, only to have them bounced because they just did not tell the story that is wanted.

So this style sheet is presented, not as a straitjacket -- express your ideas as you see fit -- but as a checklist. The material listed should be the minimum factual content of your article about the Purple Zombie or whomever you select to write about. The evaluative, analytic, opinion-type stuff is strictly up to you.

I ORIGIN Where did this guy come from? What is the source of his powers (if any), the motivation of his actions, etc? Was he supernatural, or an alien from another world, or a half-human from beneath the sea or an android? Or was he an ordinary human being?

II DESCRIPTION What did your hero look like? How did he dress? If he had an alter-ego (most did) how did he look, dress, etc?

III POWERS/DEVICES/SETTING What supernormal powers, if any, did he have? What special gadgets or devices did he use? Was there an unusual setting or element in the setting of the tales?

IV OTHER CHARACTERS Who beside the hero was a significant member of the cast? Did the hero have a side-kick, comic-relief character, girl friend, mentor, continuing foe, police contact? Were there any other noteworthy characters in the stories? If there were, describe their appearance, character, and role.

V PUBLISHING HISTORY Who were the authors, editors, artists, publishers of the series? In what comic books did the strip appear? Was it ever in other media, such as newspaper comics, movie serials or full-length films, radio or television, Little Books or other publications? When?

VI STORY CONTENT Reconstruct, to the best of your ability, one or more of the best or most important stories in the series.

VII CHARACTER CROSSOVER Did heroes or other characters from other strips ever turn up in this one? Did this hero or any character from the series ever enter another strip?

In short, paraphrasing Don Thompson: Pretend that you have a friend who is an intelligent, educated person, except that he never even heard of the Green Turtle. You are a real fan of the Turtle and are going to tell your friend all about him. That's what your article should be like.

Well, let me say one thing more: this page is intended to help people write articles for the series, not to scare them off. If you are interested but doubtful about doing an article, be assured that I will do all I can to help you out. As I've said before almost to the limits of others' listening endurance, I want this series to be really worthwhile, not just casual nostalgia a la PLAYBOY. All I can do to help contributors, I will do.

--RL

CONDUCTED BY PAT

As you see, we changed back to the usual letter column format. The first reason for doing this is that when we read over the letters in Xero # 2 we realized that in their broken up form the personality of the people writing the letter was unable to emerge. This fact was also pointed out to us in many letters that we received after sending out Xero # 2. This plus the fact that I'm just plain lazy is the reason for feverting to the usual format. This doesn't mean that it will stay this way forever. Who knows what weird shape the letter column will have in the near future?

P. L.

MAGGIE CURTIS
Room # 334 - Dascomb
Oberlin, Ohio

AND ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME is just about the best series of any kind that I've come across in a long time. Gee whizzers, you all! Holey oley!

I like Englishart, and I'm sorry that there was none visible in Xero # 2. /So are we, Maggie. P.L./ PL./ But Sylvia White's beautiful work for AICFAD really impressed me!

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT was fascinating; the whole project sounded like fun (though perhaps that isn't the right attitude to take). / Your attitude is okay by me, Maggie, although I'm sure that Ray takes the whole thing most seriously. P.L./

I now have myself a problem in a girl at Oberlin. She is rather violently interested in stf and wants to write it and love it and wants to "get into" fandom and... and I'm not quite sure how to tell her to go about it. I've directed her to [illegible] Well, at I don't have the heart to tell her to run to fans and indulge in violent games in the middle of her reducing year. I didn't have quite this problem, being a science-concentration fan, there's no fandom around here, and I don't have the faintest idea of how to slide into fandom gradually (though I did something like that). I'm afraid she's the type to burn herself out... Oh, well, any suggestions?

Yes, I liked Bellinger's article, too... I'm afraid you're right about having pith in [illegible]. And I must certainly admit that [illegible] is escaping a great deal in [illegible] deadlight with me...

NORM METCALF
Box 1262
Tyndall AFB., Fla.

Beam has hit the nail squarely on the head. In order to attract sf readers you've got to make like a sf club. I don't know about New York but in Berkeley the Little Men have been going strong from what I hear(though I've only managed to make three meetings sinc entering the service). And recently the Golden Gate Futurians hav e been revived in order to provide a more fannish group. Apparently the complaint is that the LM have become science oriented. Then I asked Ron Ellik about this at the Pittcon he said that they were discussing such items as genetics, etc. and citing a meeting which I attended (though the meeting was spent listening for Sputnik on my communications receiver so that I don't know what the speaker was discussing for sure). If this is what he meant then I'm somewhat flabbergasted. Up until three years ago the LM were discussing sf and the science behind sf. I see no harm in this. Sure, it's not "faaanish" but so what? The atmosphere of the GGFS can not expect to attract the sf reader who has no other contact with fandom. The long-time fan who has grown bored with sf but still finds enjoyment in meeting with other fans can find plenty to interest him in a faaanclub but such people are in a minor-ity when compared to the number of sf readers who are potential members of a sf fan club. Personally I enjoy both but I certainly don't expect everyone to do so. Both SPECREV and "-" are enjoyable, I'm not going to run around criticizing someone who will read only one of them.

On your letter column format I'd rather have all of one's writer's opinions together. It's easier to understand what a person thought of the entire issue while getting the sum total of the various writer's opinions on specific items is fairly easy.

One bone of contention: Blish's Pittcon speech was A QUESTION OF CONTENT.

I'd like to put down the five most impressive items I've read in fmz lately but find that after five minutes of concentrating that no one item can be thought of. My solution to this peculiar state of affairs is that I've been reading fmz too fast and furiously in the limited time available to me so that no one item has much of a chance to stick in the mind. Sure there was the SAFARI ANNUAL, but other than that I can't think of much with the exception of your own editorial in XERO #2 which has brought the question to the forefront. Here's hoping that some results come of this. You seem to be another exponent of the "sercon" school that is developing in reaction to the excessive faaanishness of late times. YANDRO has never been affected much by "faanish antics" but zines like SPECREV, ESPRIT, DREAM QUEST, AMRA, DISCORD, THE MONDAY EVENING GHOST, PARSECTION, SI-FAN, etc. all have something (thought it isn't always very well expressed). VIVA QUALITY SERCONISM.

BOB LEMAN
1214 West Maple
Rawlins, Wyoming

Warner and I, if I am not mistaken, are of the same vintage, and his commentary on the comic book series says exactly what I planned to say upon reading Ted White's excellent essay. Somehow I managed to miss the comic books entirely, except for a few FAMOUS FUNNIES. When I was in the army, the sex-and-sadism comics were in vogue, and I recollect that during basic training there was quite a brisk trade in these things going on. I tried to read them a time or two, but of course they were intended for semi-literates. Still, in later years, when I read Wertham's book damning

the comics as the source of all juvenile delinquency, it seemed to me to be a pack of damned nonsense. I only wish I'd been a comics fan, so I could wander down nostalagia's perfumed path as I read this series.

Larry Harris is becomingly modest about about PAGAN PASSIONS. I'm glad to see it. It's a Book about which an author ought to be modest.

ABSOLUTE XERO was possibly the best thing in the zine; solid, thoughtful, well-written And I couldn't agree with you more.

WALTER BREEN
1205 Peralta Avenue
Berkeley 6, California

XERO 2 clearly fulfils the promise shown in its predecessor. And it is the foremost exponent of a trend so far apparent mainly in KIPPLE and in the magnificent Ray Nelson article in HABAKKUK 5 -- a trend possibly sympotomatic of a new (numerical, Ted?) fandom, with ancient comic books as one of its dominant interests. The other trend, that towards genuine intellectuality in fanzines, shows here also, even though XERO didn't start it -- for particulars see any issue of YARHOON, or the last two of HABAKKUK, or VOID 22-1, or (most self-consciously) ESPRIT. I hope to be around to see both trends really permeating our fandom. Maybe then we will be rid of routine witherings and other fuggheadery for a while, and have no further need of the self-justifications which have occasionally shown up in fanzines; amateur publication will have by then come into its own, fulfilling Ray Nelson's prophecy in HABAKKUK 4,and needing no further excuse for its perpetuation.

Ray Beam's display idea isn't bad at all. I don't see any reason why it couldn't be repeated at the next Hobby Show at the local armory or wherever -- in New York, Los Angeles or Fond du Lac. But clearly it is more likely to flush out a covey of would-be club fans -- perilously few fanzine fans. (On the other hand, add a copy of XERO or HABAKKUK to the display, and see what happens.) I might be underestimating the situation after all. After the mailing lists have grown to a size comparable to that of the known fraternal organizations, but only then,one might realistically talk of a five dollar worldcon membership; the Pittcon business meeting provided abundant evidence of "what the market will bear" as it now stands. In the meantime, though I can't speak for fans in clubs, I am reasonably sure that with the trends spoken of in the above paragraph, fanzine fandom is far from stagnant.

I'll have a lot more to say about VENUS PLUS X in my own fanzine. Right now I'll comment of Larry's review only by saying that this book of Sturgeon's, like Bradbury's extraordinary DANDELION WINE,proves something I've been saying for a while, science-fiction is no longer a separate and unique genre, it is a technique of fantasy and one coming into increasing use in mainstream literature (with of without the capital L).

Anderson: Evidently the PO in N.Y. goofed and failed to cancel the stamp on your copy of THE RUMBLE and someone at the Rochester PO caught it. This kind of thing has often happened to me.

Terwilliger: You mean you actually brag of beint an authoritan type? Under the circumstances, how do you know that "the majority " of your students like you -- mightn't they just be trying to stay in your good graces? Something like the attitude of the majority of Christians towards Jehovah. And then you actually admit to

that many people do and don't admit -- find out about a book by reading reviews, etc., rather than wading through the book itself, simply to be one up in a discussion. Oh well, at least you're honest about it.

Dick (Lupoff, not Schultz): A splendid editorial, and one deserving far wider circulation than you most likely have for XERO. I have only one item to add to your list of five pithiest fanzine articles -- Art Castillo's extraordinary analysis of our sick society and its antecedents and relatives, " An Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Doublethink", in HABAKKUK 5.

Keep up the good work.

HENRY ACKERMAN
211 E. 81 Street
N.Y. 28, N.Y.

XERO 2 opened with an eye-catcher, the factual account by Ray Beam of adult fandom in Indiana. Indiana has always had a prominent place in "Fantopia", Bob Tucker, "Pluto", etc.,etc. Beam is "homing in" with his brain-storm of "fan-displays", in various hobby and literary publishing shows, with his "fan canvass, his substantial fee to sponsor STF world-cons, his "adult" as well as "junior-grade" planned fan activities. It's true - "fan parties must go! Orginazation must supplant!

Deckinger's nostalgic expose of the good captain was par excellente! "The Space Cadets", "Buck Rogers", and "The Invisible Man" series on TV were also good. We purchased many cereals at the time!

Harris recommends "Venus plus X". That alone makes the column! We want more Harris and his views.

Ted White's essay on comic zines was great, even tho' we are a pulp fan and skipped comic books in their era. The essay was illuminating, fascinating even. White should turn his talents to other fields. His style is as racy as a Mickey Spillane yarn!

Les Sample's treatise on Ted Pauls may be good. We'll never know as first pages of Sample's epic are "zero-ed out" of my XERO 2.

The letter department is sophisticated with its sound and fury exerpts a la "American Mercury" of a bygone day.

And now honorable mention on the art work! The Canuk's art is grotesque and outre - reminds one, somehow, of little figurines commonly seen all over New York in curio shops. Sylvia White's art work makes "piracy preferred! She has the spark.

We are qualified to judge XERO 2 as we once edited and published IMAGIMUSIC and WAVELENGTH two decades past. Also, we are still a performer in music as well as a former student of the Peabody in Baltimore, Maryland.

Letters condemning without weighing the fancts and balancing the scales are pure prejudice (word comes from "pre-judging"). Opinion is another matter indeed!

/I missed IMAGIMUSIC and WAVELENGTH. Oh, well. PL/

RUTH BERMAN
5620 Edgewater Blvd.
Minneapolis 17, Minn.

Ray Beam's article shows good thinking; I think his conclusions are valid. One point though: "if we except to hold a large membership we will have to learn to operate a science fiction organization, not a fan party." Would you really want to get a large membership at that expense? Last year in my group of school friends we had a loose sort of organization that acted much like a fan party. This year the group is larger, much larger. There are new people, new ideas, new subjects of discussion at the parties. But the parties take longer to get going, and they are not so interesting because, with so many people, very few ideas can be discussed deeply without boring most of the others. This year we flit from topic to topic. The new people seem to enjoy it. I don't. And one other point: I'm not sure what Ray means by "on a par with other nation-wide fraternal groups." Aren't most other nation-wide fraternal groups based on occupations rather than hobbies? And aren't most of the ones based on hobbies (Railfans, BSI, for instance) as in-grown and esoteric as we are?

I loved Mike Deckinger's article THOSE HIGH FLYING SPACESHIPS. I happen to have as many pleasant and nostalgic feelings toward Video as he does. I never left the dinner table when Captain Video came on. I sat down in front of the tv with my dinner on a tray five minutes before the Captain came on to make sure I wouldn't miss him. For years the carpet before the tv had a mashed-potatoes hue. You're right, Mike, the Captain was the first space-opera on tv. He came on in June, 1949 and the rest followed.

Perhaps there are some snide folk in the readership (it seems unlikely, but there just might be) who would say that Mike...and Ted White...and me, too, are just being nostalgic at great length about our child-hoods. Right! Can you think of anything pleasanter? Outside of dreaming about the future? The high-flying space ships are gone, but they've left ghosts behind.

This in turn leads to the comic book field. Is there anyone who has the "primary research material" to do an article on the Captain Video and Tom Corbett comics? I remember looking eagerly for the Video comics for months back in 1951, but apparently they were not widely distributed, because I couldn't find any. A year or so back I did find one - the first one, English edition. What the English edition was doing three blocks off skid row in Minneapolis I don't know, but there it was, so I glommed it. The picturization of the show seems to have been drawn (though it may have been changed in later issues) from the very first Video shows. Originally Video's adventures were kept rather close to earth - Video wore a plain uniform with a crash helmet, and space flight was just beginning. By 1951 he'd dropped the helmet, acquired a lightening streak across the front of his outfit, and invented inter-stellar travel. The first Captain Video comic shows the plain-suit-with-helmet, and the story takes place entirely on earth. I wonder how many issues the Video comics ran. And I wonder what they were like in the American editon. The British editon, you know, would never have suited your title; you'd have had to paraphrase it. Like, "Half in Color for Nine d."

THE SPAWN OF M.C. GAINES is excellent. Interesting for the nostalgia, and interesting for the history. The whole ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME series is wonderful. May it go on for several installments. All of them at the same level of quality as the first two, of course.

The symposium style letter column was interesting, but I think you'd find it difficult to continue. There are too many subjects that overlap (for instance, would my letter go in the comments on the comics or the Captain)? /Your letter would have appeared under both topics. P.L./

HARRY WARNER JR.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland

There's not much doubt about the most interesting and important thing in this issue: Ray Beam's article, combined with your editorial at the end, which are closely linked in general import. Strange thing about your item, incidentally. I usually make marginal notes as I read fanzines, to aid in commenting, and beside the third paragraph on page 48 I scribbled"sercon" as a possible reason for this situation, and I felt quite mortified to find two paragraphs later that you had written precisely the opinion that I wanted to express.

However, I think that there may be more reasons than those you cite for the present ill-repute of important fan writings. Through sheer accident, several of fandom's most brilliant and best-liked writers have produced the epitome of fans and fandom writings. Burbee, of course, John Berry up to the past year or two, Bob Bloch, a few less famed fans, and a multitude of imitators of them. To make things even worse, Willis' stuff appears on the surface to be just as frothy, although from the start he had very serious undercurrents that were much stronger and meaningful than the surface foam. A whole decade of fans has tried to imitate the styles and subject matter of these people. A reaction was due long ago, and I hope that this XERO helps to create it.

I tried after reading this issue to decide whether I would become a fan, if I were contacting the field for the first time today rather than in 1938. Assuming that my interests and opinions were the same today as they were when I really got in touch with fandom, I strongly doubt that I would find enough congenial material in most of today's fandoms to lure me into real activity. Of course there's AMRA and NEW FRONTIERS and SPECULATIVE REVIEW and a few others, but they seem rather inconspicuous in the flood of private-joke, in-group slanted fanzines that are flooding us. These fandom fanzines are fine, when we know the people and events concerned, but there should be more science fiction fanzines to go along with them.

Incidentally, I've found that one excellent test of whether a fan article is pith or piffle is this: did I look up anything, do research on anything, while writing it, or did I just dash off everything from things that I think and remember? It works almost every time. /This test also worked for me when wrestling with a slew of term papers at college. P.L./

A larger fandom doesn't mean much to me in my isolation but I can understand its importance where a municipal fan group is striving to stay alive. /But what good is a larger fandom unless you can attract faanish type people - That's what seems to be the big problem. P.L./I think that the Indianapolis bunch was on the right track in one important way: personal contact with these possible fans. All the time and good intentions available don't help as much when they take the form of letters and sample fanzines and notices in the prozines as they do when you stand face to face with a possibility and talk him into promising to attend a meeting. From my experience with photography clubs, which are like science fiction organizations in certain ways, I believe that you must have some semblance of formal program and procedure at your club meetings to hold the attention of potential new members.

I got an enormous kick out of Ted's long article, particularly after reading that apology for sketching and failure to recall things vividly. The barrage of dates and names and numbers that follows this makes me wonder what sort of documents Ted could write if he had his collection at hand. The illustrations are among the best stenciling that I've seen on this side of the Atlantic. / Thank Sylvia White for that. P.L./ I can't figure out if the third face from the top on the frontispiece indicates that some famed comic character was modeled after Ted White, or vice versa. /It's just a self-portrait of the author. P.L./

BUCK COULSON
Route 3
Wabash, Indiana

Okay, so this time I'll comment. What were you trying to do, slip over a fast one in that editorial? I'm referring, of course, to your ploy of beginning by stating that fandom needs more writers who say someting worthwhile, and then shifting fast into saying that the writers for XERO must say something -- were you hoping that your readers wouldn't notice that a word had been dropped along the line? (Example: "Mike Deckinger says only 'I used to like the Captain Video TV series'." So he's said something; so who cares? I'm not grotching that it was a bad article or anything; he did a reasonably entertaining job. But do you really think that you should have mentioned it in the same breath, as it were, as "Who Killed Science Fiction?", Busby's article on the Dean Drive, and the other examples quoted?)

As you say, there's nothing wrong with simply being entertaining, and there's nothing wrong with Mike's article, except that it violates the principles that you claim for XERO. (Like, you shouldn't preach one thing and practice another in the same issue; it's too easy for critics to spot. Make them work for their egoboo.)

Oh, one more comment...."Venus Plus X" is a shocking book? Good lord, and other ejaculations. Are science fiction fans all prudes?

NOREEN SHAW
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I have an interesting theory that I fequently put into practice. When I get a new fanzine, I read it and write a mental letter of comment. Sometimes I later see the editor and quote him from my mental letter of comment. Then the next issue of his zine comes and I discover that our psi communication was working imperfectly and I have nothing at all to represent me in the lettercol.

Now that XERO 2 is safely in hand and I have finished it I am going to give you an honest-to-Ghod typed letter of comment. You two rate.

I LIKED Xero 2. I liked it as much as Xero 1. In the first issue I must say that I found Pat's article on Titus most enlightening. I have not yet read the last one in the series, but I certainly intend to. I can't understand how people can make a review substitute for the pleasure of reading the whole thing. I won't even redd a condensed version of a book I'm particularly interested in. At any rate, Pat, you exhibited the qualities of a first-rate commentator and I only wish there were more book-in-depth pieces like that around. /Blush! As for missing the pleasure of reading, it may be (as Walter says) purely a case of gamesmanship, with no reading pleasure involved. PL/

I also enjoyed the Captain Marvel bit and, in the current issue, Ted White's continuation of the comic book series. Only a few years separate us in age (I think), but these few years are enough to put me into a different era as far as comic books are concerned. I bought my first one when I was around seven. I'm sure it was FAMOUS FUNNIES and I bought great quantities of them and traded with other kids frequently until I was about twelve or thirteen. I then went on to more adult mags and completely forgot comics existed until one day in 1952 I was in a small bookstore looking over pocketbooks when I noticed the comic book rack at the rear of the store. Curiously, I glanced at it and was literally astounded to see that it had about 500 titles displayed. I was rather glad I had stopped reading them because I never could have afforded to keep up. Incidentally, that was the day I bought my first copy of MAD. At any rate, I missed a lot of the war year heroes and reading about them is of great interest to me. I hope the series continues. It is nice to find a fanzine with real enthusiasm for its subject.

This brings me to your pithy editorial. A fine statement of your views and one much needed today when anybody with the price of a ream of paper thinks he's a fanèd. I don't know if I can think of five significant items of fannish writing for the past year, but let me try.

1. Busby on the Dean Drive, definitely
2. Bergeron on the candidates and the TV debates (WARHOON)
3. WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION?
4. Harmon on I LOVE A MYSTERY (RETROGRADE /Discord/)
5. Lupoff on the nature of material in fanzines (XER 2)

That wasn't so hard and I'm sure I could think of a few more, too.

REDD BOGGS
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It's absurd to censure Steel Sterling merely because this chap abtained his powers by "jumping into a vat of molten steel." I think it would be safer and wiser to consider unbelievability an absolute and admit that the whole horde of super-heroes would be laughed out of existence if anybody considered them seriously for a moment. Take Superman, for example, and attempt to see the Superman/Clark Kent situation realistically for a change. Someone figured out that Supe would kick a big hole in the floor when he jumped off on a flight, and such physical matters havd to be considered. But also important is the matter of psychology. How could a superman possibly be as altruistic as the comic book hero? Isn't it true that the altruism is that of the dog-lover, the man who works gratis for the Animal Rescue League, just because he likes dogs? When one starts to mull over such questions, it becomes clear that comic books suffer, not from an overdose of imagination, but a rather shocking lack thereof./Hmmmmm. Would you consider doing an article on the psychology of super-heroes? PL/

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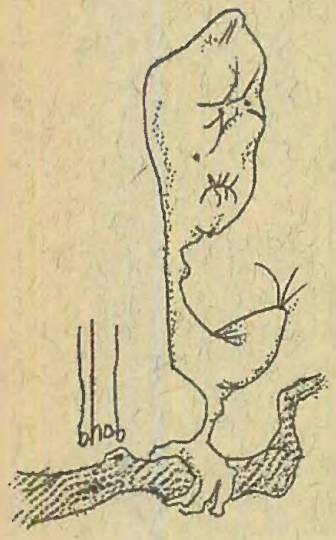
Thanks to the many other whose letters were squeezed out, including Emile Greenleaf, Mike Deckinger, Dean Grennell, Larry Harris, Don Anderson, Dick Schultz, Betty Kujawa, Bob Leman, Bob Lichtman, Larry Stark, Jerry Page, Steve Stiles, Jim Harmon, and the fourth grade of Public School #32, Flushing, Long Island, New York.

Pat Lupoff

ABSOLUTE ZERO

N—N—Ninth F—Fandom?



Walter Breen's suggestion that we may be entering a new period of fandom is somewhat of a jar. The numerical fandoms game had seemed to be over for a while, and in view of the shenanigans that used to take place in the game, it was a small loss. Yet, a little reflection on the subject suggests that we may be in the latter stages of just such a transition right now.

If this is so, the question of what fandom we've been in and what fandom we're entering arises. Peter Vorzimer and Company's Seventh Fandom movement was a thoroughly deserved flop. Fannish evolution is a natural process and no one has yet succeeded in creating an artificial Great Leap Forward. The years since the Seventh Fandom abortion, however, have had a distinct flavor to them...the characteristics of "a fandom" have been present, and a reluctance to use the discredited name of the Vorzimer movement makes it pretty much mandatory to call the years since then Eighth Fandom. If we are now in fact entering a new period, it will logically be Ninth Fandom.

But are we really entering a new period? There has been some turnover in fannish populace, but not very much. A "new fandom" doesn't mean that everybody who has been around for any length of time folds his tent and steals silently away, leaving the field clear for any and all newcomers who feel like taking over. On the contrary, there can be a major fannish transition with little or no turnover in personnel, although the leading active fans will generally change at such a time.

There are, however, certain characteristics of "a fandom" which do change, and when most or all of them have undergone a transition, why, lo and behold, it's a new fandom! These characteristics include:

1. Geographic center
2. Leading fanzines
3. General attitude toward fandom
4. Attitude toward science fiction
5. Favorite science fiction magazine
6. "Outside" interests held in common

Well, let's examine the state of fandom in view of these six criteria, and see whether or not we are really entering a new era.

	Eighth	*Ninth*
Geographic center	I think there could be very little dispute on this point: Berkeley, California.	Just now in the process of emerging, there are centers of fannish activity in New York, Chicago, Seattle, plus regional resurgences in the South and Midwest. For obvious reasons I favor New York, but one thing is certain: Berkeley is past its zenith.
Leading fanzines	FANAC. In smaller measures, CRY and SHAGGY.	The heir apparent is not so apparent. Candidates include DISCORD, HABAKKUK, KIPPLE. Also, keep an eye out for two projected zines dealing with comic books and related topics: COMIC ART and FORGOTTEN WORLDS.
General attitude toward fandom	After a struggle with the Fandom is a Way of Life forces, clearly Fandom is Just a Goddam Hobby. In a word, faanish.	By ghod, a genuine dialectical synthesis: Fandom is a Serious Hobby. In a phrase, sophisticated sercon.

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Attitude toward science fiction	Resentment. Here we were, the faithful ones. After years and years of unwavering -- well, almost unwavering -- loyalty, stf had turned its back on us. Gone were the fanzine reviews. Rats!	Remorse. Your anger when your sweetheart steps out doesn't make you want to see her in her coffin. And that's what happened to us. Face it: hardcovers, paperbacks, tv, movies, slicks..stf may prosper in all these forms, but our science fiction was magazine science fiction, and that science fiction is all but dead.
Favorite prozine	Usually ASTOUNDING, occasionally, F&SF.	Almost by default, AMAZING STORIES.
Common interests	Movies, parties, politics, jazz.	Comic books!

There seems little room for doubt, in the face of the evidence, that without fanfare and with no conscious effort on the part of anyone, we have indeed reached the end of a fannish era.

Spill a tear, dear friends, and then let us turn our faces toward the brighter day.

— Dick